40 YEARS OF SCOTLAND YARD

NEW SCOTLAND YARD, on the Thames Embankment, London—the home of the world's most famous detective organization.

Forty Years of Scotland Yard

TO THE MEMORY OF MY SONS

FREDERICK MARTIN WENSLEY

HAROLD WILLIAM WENSLEY

WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES

IN FRANCE

FREDERICK PORTER WENSLEY, former chief constable of the C. I. D., New Scotland Yard. It was under his régime that the famous Flying Squad and the equally famous Big Four were brought into being.

Forty Years of Scotland Yard

THE RECORD OF A LIFETIME'S SERVICE IN THE CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION DEPARTMENT

BY

Frederick Porter Wensley

FORMERLY CHIEF CONSTABLE, CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION DEPARTMENT, NEW SCOTLAND YARD

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

George Dilnot

ILLUSTRATED

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INTRODUCTION

IT MAY seem an odd thing to say of a man whose record as a detective is second to that of none, but if I were asked to indicate the dominant personal quality of Frederick Porter Wensley I should say it was simplicity. He has no poses, strikes no attitudes. He looks men and things in the face and with a childlike logic strips them of all nonessentials. "Y' know," he will say, in that slow emphatic way of his, ramming down the tobacco in his pipe with his thumb, "the truth is all that matters. The single object is to get at the truth."

This simplicity of outlook, combined with great resolution and an utter absence of fear, either moral or physical, has mostly shown Wensley a clear vision of his path in any emergency. A violent, desperate man flies into a darkened cellar. Wensley, a young constable, follows and captures him singlehanded. There was nothing else to do. An officer is wounded at Sidney Street and is carried over a roof. Wensley is trapped on that roof under a rain of bullets because, as senior officer, he conceives it his duty to be the last to seek safety. No alternative enters his mind. An apparent case of suicide by gas poisoning arises. "Who," asks Wensley, "turned off the gas?"

There are, in truth, many sensational happenings related in this book. Wensley sedulously refrains from dwelling upon this aspect. A fine contempt for the personal vanity that leads to exaggeration so often evident in memoirs of this kind is part of his make-up. For that reason this book, in one respect, may fail to do him justice. No shred of credit is taken from men who have

worked with him and under him in the investigation and solution of some great crime. Only those intimately behind the scenes know, as one of them put it, "how often Wensley has loaded the gun while another man has pulled the trigger."

To imagine Wensley (as some do) as a stern, relentless, unfeeling official of justice, hard as steel, unforgiving as Fate, is to form a conception as utterly different from the real man as it is possible to be. There are passages in this book that, to the discerning, will reveal a different picture. Here is a human man unswerving in his duty, but keenly alive and far from indifferent to the failings of human nature. It was no rare thing for him in his early days from his meagre earnings to make sacrifices to ensure some mitigation of hardship for those caught in the eddies of crime and poverty. Of these things he does not talk. Or consider his condemnation of "official nagging." The men who worked with Wensley from the days when he first achieved authority were led by force of character and example rather than driven by the crack of the whip. I do not believe that he ever put a man "on the report" for disciplinary action in his life—although, of course, he has had to deal with men reported *to* him since he reached high rank in the service. Let me give an example of his methods that was told me by a barrister friend of mine. One of Wensley's staff who had been hard driven for many hours complained to his chief that he was too exhausted to follow up a point that necessitated immediate inquiry. "Oh, all right," said Wensley. "I'll do it myself." At that moment he had himself been out of bed for more than twenty-four hours.

The fact is that at heart Frederick Wensley is a kind and tolerant man, whose long experience of life in all its raw reality has made him a philosopher as well as a man of action. On general principles he is no upholder of capital punishment; he is no subscriber to the belief that

prison life is not dreaded by the average criminal. Nor do criminals for him come under one label as necessarily wicked men or women. That they feared him for his vigour and determination was true; but he was respected rather than hated. He dealt with them as he found them. "There was no nonsense about Wensley," wrote one burglar. "Of all the numerous police officers that I have known in my life he was easily the sternest. His determined iron jaw, his piercing dark eyes [*sic*], and his menacing official mannerisms were more than sufficient to cow any stubborn criminal into submission. . . . It was no use playing about with him. . . . He began to ask me questions and I don't mind admitting that they took a bit of answering. . . ." Contrast this view of the man with that of another criminal who, impressed by the quiet geniality of the detective, observed, "You ought to have been a parson instead of a police officer." Yet the quality that struck both these men was really the same—a sincerity that was as genuine in one case as in the other.

Wensley's career from the bottom to the top of the Criminal Investigation Department has been marked by an extraordinary range of solid achievement. This is no figure of speech, for somewhere at Scotland Yard there is a list of commendations by judges, magistrates, commissioners, and others—never lightly given—running into hundreds. I doubt if such a list has ever been paralleled in the history of the C. I. D. There have been other distinctions, too. When the King's Police Medal was instituted, in 1909, the first detective officer whose name appeared on the list to receive that coveted honour was that of Wensley—"for a specially distinguished record in detective service." That was twenty years before he retired. At a later date there came to him membership of the Order of the British Empire, and he was ultimately made an Officer of the Order. But I suspect that he values not less than these that series of warm tributes to which

no reference will be found in the following pages, paid to him in private letters by eminent men who have had intimate glimpses of his skill as the master detective of the age.

I do not myself think that the full measure of Wensley's versatility and ability dawned on Scotland Yard for the first twenty years of his service. True, he had won a great reputation in the East End, but that very fact may have led to his services being restricted to that locality. There he was, catching rascals, thieves, and murderers of every degree, and there it may have been thought was his field. He knew it as no other man knew it; knew its cosmopolitan criminals and their ways; walked among them night and day unafraid and unarmed (queer that this man who has had to deal with more desperate folk than most living detectives should have scorned to carry any weapon, even at Sidney Street); and took hard knocks with equanimity, as part of the game. A good patrol, a good sergeant, a good inspector—always for the East End. He had reached a rank which many men of his profession regard as the pinnacle of their ambition ere he was set in a position that gave full scope to his qualities. On the other hand, he makes no secret that he had come to love the life, and for him the district possessed a charm of its own. As he says, there was no make-believe. A man was what he was, good or bad.

The time came when he was made chief detective inspector. To his relief he was allowed to remain in the East End—an unprecedented thing, for officers of this rank have before and since always been attached to Scotland Yard itself. There, but for the accident of the war, he might have remained till he retired, and a notable chapter in criminal investigation might have taken a different course.

Through the death of Chief Detective Inspector Ward, who was killed by a Zeppelin bomb in 1916,

Wensley became the senior chief detective inspector of the C. I. D. and went, a little doubtfully, to Scotland Yard. The vision and force with which he tackled problems in a wider sphere could not fail of recognition. Delicate war work, involving great issues, had to be carried through, and much of this fell to Wensley. He became a familiar figure to many of the war leaders and they were appreciative of the manner in which this silent and resolute man dealt with these matters. But he preserves a determined reticence on this part of his career.

Very quickly he saw certain weaknesses in the organization of the C. I. D., and realized that they would have to be remedied if the new conditions of crime that he recognized as certain to arise out of the war were to be met. In practically all essentials the scheme of dividing London into areas under the control of four detective superintendents, and the institution of a mobile force of detectives in high-powered cars which has since become known as the Flying Squad, was his.

There can be no doubt that Scotland Yard was lucky to have such a man at hand to assume the reins by the time the post-war wave of crime reached its crest. The circumstances were novel both in volume and method. As after all great wars, there was a great outburst of crime of all sorts from murder to petty larceny. Mechanical transport—particularly motorcars—offered facilities to criminals that had never existed before.

Now it is one thing to be an active investigator of individual crimes and quite another to sit in the chair of authority and handle so complex a machine as the Criminal Investigation Department, which deals with crime as a whole. But in the few years he had spent at Scotland Yard Wensley had studied the machine as he had already studied the criminal—at first hand. He knew the men with whom he had to work, their strengths and weaknesses, and he used them in the most effective

way. He tolerated no "passengers" on his staff. In spite of his expressed dislike of the office chair he showed himself able quickly to grip a complicated situation and devise instant measures to deal with it. Long days of office routine were often followed by long nights on the warpath. He expected no man to do what he could not do himself, and almost always, on major investigations, and sometimes on minor ones, he was tireless in resource. This was the man on whom, perhaps, the heaviest direct responsibility fell for meeting and defeating crime after the war. How he succeeded there is no need to tell.

When he retired, at the end of July, 1929, the following appeared in *Police Orders:*

> Mr. Wensley joined the Metropolitan Police on January 16th, 1888, and was appointed to the C. I. D. on October 3rd, 1895. He became chief constable in December, 1924. His ability and devotion to the work of the Department has been a notable feature in its history. The Secretary of State has expressed his appreciation of Mr. Wensley's long and exceptionally distinguished service, and with this expression the commissioner wishes to be heartily associated.
>
> GEORGE DILNOT.

PREFACE

I TELL in this book of some of the experiences of forty years. Since I have kept no diaries, and consulted no records save those accessible to the general public, these memories and reflections must be regarded as a personal narrative. There are limits of discretion and taste beyond which it is neither necessary nor desirable to step. I am acutely conscious, also, that I have omitted the names of many of the able and loyal colleagues with whom it has been my privilege to be associated at various times. To have dealt with them all would have swelled this volume to undue proportions. Within those bounds I have tried to be entirely frank in presenting an unexaggerated picture of the realities of detective life.

Apart from any general interest these memoirs may possess, it is my hope that they may afford some instruction and guidance, in not too indigestible a form, to the younger members of my profession.

CHAPTER I

A Constable in Whitechapel

I WAS born at Taunton, in 1865, and come of a yeoman stock that I believe can be traced back to the twelfth century in Somersetshire, and much earlier in the north of England. This, however, is the story of a detective, and I shall not weary the reader with genealogical details. Nor would it interest him if I rambled at large on my boyhood ambitions to become a detective. Sufficient that they have been realized, and that I have spent more than forty years in the finest service among the finest body of men in the world.

Certainly my wildest flights of fancy never made me picture myself as rising to the highest rank ever reached by a detective officer at Scotland Yard. When I joined the Metropolitan Force I did not know a single police officer—not one. And I may be forgiven the appearance of self-sufficiency if I add that from the bottom to the top of the ladder no vestige of influence was brought to bear in my case.

I came to London at the latter end of 1887, to join the service. Those were the days when a young policeman was given a few weeks' drill and then flung on a beat to pick up the elements of his trade as he might. So it was with me. By the beginning of 1888 I was wearing a brand-new uniform, had taken my place in the L Division, and was patrolling the streets of Lambeth, very proud and confident in myself.

In a little while I was neither so proud nor so confident. Lambeth had playful ways of educating a raw

constable. My first lesson came in a street just off the New Cut, when I undertook the rôle of peacemaker in a drunken quarrel and got tossed through the plate-glass window of a public house for my pains.

This did not altogether subdue me. I was a zealous youngster with a belief that the blue uniform was so impressive that I need fear no odds. One evening I met a group of hilarious spirits emerging from a local boxing saloon and spreading themselves arm-in-arm across the pavement. A more experienced man would have turned a blind eye. I, however, reproved them for obstruction, and in a little time my hands were remarkably full. They got me down and jumped on me—there were no ethical rules in the Lambeth code for a rough-and-tumble with a policeman. I thought every rib in my body was broken. Luckily for me, help was at hand. It chanced that the tallest man in the force, a constable of the A Division, returning from his annual holidays with his wife, was on the way home from Waterloo Station. He dashed to my assistance and was pretty badly mauled before other police came up. Four or five men were arrested and were later sent to prison for periods of from four to six months each. As for myself, I was laid up for about four months—and so had opportunity to reflect on the result of ill-judged zeal.

I have had a pretty long and close experience of violent men in all sorts of circumstances, yet only once have I had to use a truncheon effectively. That was another incident of my early education.

One day an affable stranger carrying a heavy cane walked into the bar of a public house and insisted that everyone should drink with him. The invitation was accepted with alacrity, but after the drinks had been dispensed it appeared that the affable stranger was unable to pay. The nearest constable was sent for. I was that constable.

As I approached him he suddenly flashed a sword from the cane he was carrying and struck at my arm. I did not wait to argue. I slipped under the blade and swung a blow with my truncheon at the back of his neck. He fell like a sack, and as I dragged him to his feet I saw that he was bleeding profusely. I was a little frightened, but I got him to the station, where we both appeared alarming spectacles; for by this time I, also, was smothered with blood. However, no really serious harm had been done. He was attended to by a doctor, and a charge of disorderly conduct and assault was entered against him. I heard, somewhat gloomily, that I should be "put on the report" for improper use of my truncheon.

My justification, however, quickly came from the prisoner himself. He did his best to break up a cab in which he was taken to the police court. The case had scarcely begun before, with extraordinary swiftness and agility, the prisoner clambered over the side of the dock and leapt to the solicitors' table. He was seized and overpowered before he could get at the magistrate, a rather peppery old gentleman named Shiel. Shiel had sprung to his feet in consternation.

"Anyone can see that this man is mad," he said. "Take him away."

They took him to the infirmary, where he had to be put in a strait-jacket, and before he was sent to a lunatic asylum it was found that he had, a short time previously, assaulted some police officers who had tried to induce him to come off the plinth of Nelson's Column, where he was addressing an imaginary meeting at four o'clock in the morning on Boxing Day.

The poor fellow escaped from the asylum some years later and hid for a month in a church, retiring to the belfry when the services were on. He was discovered in a fearfully emaciated condition and, I believe, died.

During my first year of service the Jack the Ripper murders occurred in Whitechapel. Again and again bodies of women, murdered and mutilated, were found in the East End; but every effort to bring the assassin to justice failed. For a while there was an atmosphere of terror in the district.

This business brought about my first glimpse of the neighbourhood in which so much of my life was to be spent. In view of the work that I was to do there later there was a touch of coincidence in the fact that my earliest recollections should be concerned with a great murder mystery.

Not that I had much to do with it. In common with hundreds of others I was drafted there, and we patrolled the streets—usually in pairs—without any tangible result. We did, however, rather anticipate a great commercial invention. To our clumsy regulation boots we nailed strips of rubber, usually bits of old bicycle tires, and so ensured some measure of silence when walking.

Officially, only five (with a possible sixth) murders were attributed to Jack the Ripper. There was, however, at least one other, strikingly similar in method, in which the murderer had a very narrow escape. This occurred something more than two years after the supposed last Ripper murder.

The story is chiefly concerned with a very young officer named Ernest Thompson who had been only six weeks in the service when, on February 13, 1891—an ominous date—he went out for the first time alone on night duty. A part of his beat was through Chambers Street, from which at that time a turning, most inappropriately named Swallow Gardens, ran under a dark, dismal railway arch towards the Royal Mint.

Thompson was patrolling Chambers Street when a man came running out of Swallow Gardens towards him. As soon as he perceived the officer he turned tail, made

off at speed in the opposite direction, and was in a few seconds lost to view.

Thompson moved into Swallow Gardens and on turning the corner came across the body of a murdered woman—Frances Coles—mutilated in much the same fashion as the victims of the Ripper. The spot had possibly been chosen because it commanded a view in three directions.

It is probable that had Thompson been a little more experienced he would have taken up the chase of the fugitive immediately. In all likelihood he would have made a capture which might possibly have solved a great mystery. But it is understandable that this young man was so taken aback by his grim discovery that he did not take the obvious steps. It was certainly through no lack of personal courage, as later events showed.

Whether the murderer was Jack the Ripper or not, he escaped. I fancy that the lost opportunity preyed on Thompson's mind, for I heard him refer to it in despondent terms more than once, and he seemed to regard the incident as presaging some evil fate for himself. By an uncanny coincidence his forebodings came true. The first time he went on night duty he discovered a murder; the last time he went on duty, some years later, he was murdered himself.

It happened in this way. There was a night coffee stall in the Commercial Road, much haunted by bad characters on the lookout for victims whom they could follow to some quiet spot and rob—often with violence. Instructions were given to the police to prevent those not actually having refreshments from hanging about this stall.

One morning, about one o'clock, Thompson ordered away a young man named Abrahams, who was forcing his attentions on some young women at the stall. After some argument, Abrahams moved sulkily away to some distance, opened a clasp knife, and made as if to return.

Thompson interposed, and a moment later fell to the ground, stabbed in the neck. But he did not fall alone. With great resolution he gripped his assailant's collar and held him till other officers came running up.

"Hold him! He has stabbed me!" he said. A moment later he was dead. Even in death he held so tightly to his prisoner that it took two men to loosen his grip.

Abrahams struggled violently when they got him away and they certainly did not handle him lightly. At any rate, he was suffering from bruises and other minor injuries when taken to the station.

At the trial Mr. C. F. Gill (afterwards Sir Charles Gill, K. C.) put forward the ingenious defense that the injuries of Abrahams had been inflicted before the stabbing, and he was successful in getting the jury to return a verdict of manslaughter. I remember Mr. Justice Phillimore dryly remarking that the crime might have been held to be murder. Abrahams died in prison.

The excursion to Whitechapel was only a break in the routine of life in the L Division. One of the incidents of those days I best remember is the elation with which I learned that I had earned my first official reward. It was a trivial case, but it helped to excite my ambitions. One night I noticed a couple of girls walking along the New Cut. For some reason I decided that they had been up to mischief, so I followed them. They turned into an enclosed coffee stall at the corner of Blackfriars Road and, standing close by in a dark corner, I listened to their talk for a while. Then I casually strolled up and joined in the conversation. They betrayed some embarrassment, but I gleaned enough to feel justified in taking them to the station.

It turned out that the previous night they had robbed some of their fellow lodgers at a girls' home at Hackney and escaped through a dormitory window, from which

they had dropped onto the roof of an outhouse below and thence scrambled to the ground. They were each given three months' hard labour, and I pridefully read the remark of the magistrate, Mr. Montagu Williams, on the charge sheet: "I think the constable in this case displayed great intelligence and activity in arresting the prisoners." This was emphasized by an award of five shillings from the commissioner—not to be despised at a time when I was getting twenty-four shillings a week.

Luck has since then come my way in the matter of commendations and rewards, for it happens that the hundreds I have received constitute a record. But I should not like any misconception to arise on this subject. The highest official reward that I have ever obtained from Scotland Yard, even as a chief detective inspector, and in connection with a murder case, has been four pounds, and the average, of course, is much less. In the service, however, these things have a value far beyond the actual money.

When I reached a position where I often had to consider a detective's capacity and energy, I found that the best standard by which to judge him was by what he had done. Confidential reports might be unconsciously swayed by personal liking or prejudice. On the other hand, judges, juries, magistrates, and commissioners do not consistently praise a man unless he has done good work.

In 1891 there was some trouble over police pay and conditions, and a number of men at Bow Street attempted an abortive strike. Several were dismissed and I—with other officers—was transferred to the E Division to take their place. I had not been there very long before I was sent to the H Division at Whitechapel.

At the time I resented the move to what was then one of the worst quarters of London. Not only did the thickly populated slum area of Whitechapel and the surrounding districts breed many of the worst of our native

criminals and desperadoes, but it harboured a cosmopolitan population, chiefly Jews, many of whom were decent hard-working folk, though others were the very scum of Europe. I little realized then that I should stay there twenty-five years and not leave it till I had become a chief detective inspector.

Had I been superstitious I might have been depressed by the number allotted to me—402 H. Its previous owner had been a man named Windebank. Some man had attacked him with a coal heaver's shovel, causing such injuries that he became insane and shortly afterwards died in an asylum. The man who had held the number before him had also been assaulted so severely that he had been invalided from the service, and I am not sure that he, also, did not die. However, I was prepared to take my chances. I thought I had learned something at Lambeth.

Lambeth, however, was a model of propriety and decorum compared with Whitechapel. Most of the inhabitants of my new division considered that they had a natural right to get fighting drunk and knock a policeman about whenever the spirit moved them. Bruises and worse were our routine lot. Gangs of hooligans infested the streets and levied blackmail on timorous shopkeepers. There was an enormous amount of personal robbery with violence. The maze of narrow ill-lighted alleys offered easy ways of escape after a man had been knocked down and his watch and money stolen. It was no picnic for a young police officer, but at least it was never dull. You never knew what might happen.

In the early hours of one winter morning I came suddenly upon a fellow who had just knocked out a sailor—sailors recently paid off from a long voyage were "easy marks"—and was bending over to rob him. The assailant took to his heels as he saw me, and I gave chase. I was close behind him when he turned into a common lodg-

ing house of very unenviable reputation. He rushed to the basement, and I followed him. There was a single dim light burning, and before I could get to him he had turned it out.

Needless to say, my lantern, as was usual with all lanterns supplied to us at that time, had gone out the moment I began to run. I groped for him in the darkness, and when I laid hands on him we had quite a dramatic fight, in which he, at least, was not hampered by any rules. He yelled for help, and I might have been in a nasty fix if those of his friends who ran down to his assistance had been less half-hearted. At last, however, I got him out into the street. The seaman was still lying on the pavement where he had fallen. With help I got them both to the station and told my story.

A fatherly inspector shook his head at me reprovingly. "You foolhardy young ass," he commented, though perhaps in somewhat stronger terms, "do you know what might have happened to you in that place alone in the dark?"

I must confess I had not considered that point of view. However, I was commended; and the assailant, who was shown to have a bad criminal record, got five years' penal servitude.

As time went on, my determination to become a detective increased. To this end I bent all my efforts—although not exactly in the way the reader of detective fiction might suppose. I spent a great deal of my spare time getting up the subjects in which a candidate for the Criminal Investigation Department had to pass, and I made it my business to study the ways of thieves and to know as many as I could—not so difficult a matter since there were plenty about me.

I can scarcely claim it as a merit that I worked hard. I found it no hardship. It was interesting, fascinating, my living—and my hobby. Nor did enthusiasm wane with

the passage of time. I lived for my job, not for a week or a year, but for more than forty years.

Official hours meant nothing to me. I remember that while I was on patrol one winter's night I picked up the name of a man who was suspected of a nasty case of highway robbery. I finished my tour of duty, went home, and, changing into plain clothes, posted myself inconspicuously near a common lodging house where I could see everyone who entered or left. There I remained, very cold and hungry, till half-past one in the day.

At about that time a colleague passed me. "You're in trouble," he remarked. "They're waiting for you at the Thames Police Court. Didn't you know you had a prisoner on remand coming up to-day?"

I rushed to the court. The inspector on duty, a very good friend of mine, made as if he would hit me with a ruler. "You damned young scamp! Why were you not here to deal with your prisoner? You'll be on the report."

I pushed by him and met the reproof of the magistrate by producing my notebook. In fact, the prisoner had been brought up a day too soon. Sir John Dickenson, the magistrate, who never forgot that he was a gentleman, readily admitted that he might have been responsible for the confusion. I gave my evidence and returned to my vigil outside the lodging house. This time luck was with me. In a little time I saw my man and arrested him. I took him to the station, where he was identified as the thief and ultimately sentenced. A few hours later I was again on night duty. It was a piece of work well worth the loss of a little sleep.

I flattered myself I did pretty well. Again and again compliments came from Scotland Yard. I was "noted" for prompt action in arresting a burglar; commendations and rewards descended upon me for "vigilance," for "perseverance and ability," for "tact and determination"

in dealing with other robbers. And yet, somehow, I remained a uniformed constable. Transfer to the Criminal Investigation Department depended upon the recommendation of the divisional detective inspector—they were called local detective inspectors then—and I was not regarded with any particular favour by the officer who held that position.

As keen as ever, but my hopes of becoming a detective a little damped, I went on catching thieves. One day I was trudging my beat when Mr. Dodd, the superintendent, a queer old bird but mightily efficient at his work, approached me.

"What sort of service have you got, Wensley?" he demanded abruptly.

I told him.

"Why haven't you gone into the Department?" he shot at me.

Now, although there are several departments in the Metropolitan Police, *the* Department only means one thing. But I probably looked stolid enough as I replied, "I don't think I'm wanted, sir."

"Ah," he grunted. *"I'm* looking after this division. Will you come in?" Without waiting for a reply he went on: "For the sake of formality you had better put in an application through the local detective inspector. I'll see to it."

As may be imagined, I lost no time in carrying out his instructions. Dodd was a man of quick action when he had made up his mind. Within a few days my name appeared in Police Orders as having joined the Criminal Investigation Department on probation.

I was a detective at last. I doffed my uniform that night. The next time I wore one was thirty-four years later, when I took my place as Chief Constable of the C. I. D. to watch the centenary parade of police from outside Buckingham Palace.

CHAPTER II

The Shank of a Button

In no period of its existence has Scotland Yard seen more changes than during the time I was with the C. I. D. I may, I think, claim to have had a hand in many of them, and I am in some sense a link between the old conditions and the new. I have seen the investigation of crime become more highly organized and every scientific and mechanical aid that the wit of man can devise placed at the service of the detective. This is as it should be, for the circumstances of crime have changed, although crime itself has not.

There is perhaps a danger, in one way, of overestimating the value of these things. In truth, all the mechanical ingenuity in the world will never stamp the criminal out. The only real method is to employ detectives who *know* rogues by direct contact, know their habits, their ways of thought, their motives, and above all, know their friends and associates. In the vast majority of cases information can only be gained in this way.

I shall return to these subjects in a later chapter. I mention them now to emphasize the fact that, when I began, a detective was forced to rely much more upon himself than upon the elaborate machinery that is now behind him. He had to develop faculties of memory and self-reliance, and he was often confronted with an unexpected emergency in which the responsibility of a decision could not be shirked.

I learned my business in a sterner school than that which now teaches young detectives at Scotland Yard the

elements of their profession. Since those days I have known detectives as good as those early colleagues of mine, but never any better. They would have been outstanding figures at any time. Some of them, by present-day standards, may have been a little rough and uncultivated, but they had the most wonderful knowledge of criminals and never forgot a face or a fact—and they seldom had to refer to a notebook. They lived for their work.

Typical of them was "Tricky Tommy" Hancock, who spent practically every minute of his spare time increasing his knowledge of crooks by going to the courts and noting hundreds of professional thieves. Then there was Dessent, a fine officer with every qualification for any position in the service, although his health compelled him to retire as a sergeant. "Tommy Roundhead" (Eli Caunter), "Johnny Upright" (Sergeant Thicke), "Chinaman" Thompson, Billy Blight, Gill, Pedder, and others—good men all and great public servants, though few of them reached high rank in the service. They were of a type to whom their successors owe much, and I am proud to have graduated among them.

I, myself, early attained the distinction of a nickname among the criminals of the district. Those who spoke English called me "Weasel"—which I felt to be something of a compliment—and the foreigners corrupted it into "Venzel."

However Whitechapel of that time might be regarded by the ordinary citizen, there is no doubt that it was the finest training ground imaginable for a young detective. Men and women ripe for any crime from murder to pilfering were to be found in its crowded slums and innumerable common lodging houses. The off-scourings of the criminal population of Europe—Russians, Poles, Germans, Austrians, and Frenchmen—found a refuge there. Many of them, British as well as foreign, carried

knives or guns which they did not hesitate to use. Organized gangs of desperate men and lads, armed with lethal weapons, infested the streets, terrorizing whole areas, blackmailing tradesmen, holding up wayfarers, and carrying out more or less open robbery in any direction that offered. Murder was probably more common than the official statistics showed; for bodies of people, who it is likely had been knocked on the head, were frequently found in the streets, often near disreputable houses. Unless there was obvious evidence of foul play, the inquest verdicts were usually indefinite.

Robbery with violence was a commonplace thing, and housebreakers abounded. There was no class of criminal that was not represented. One day, perhaps, I would be dealing with coiners, another with receivers, a third with pickpockets, and a fourth with a group of warehouse breakers. I had more individual scope than would be given a young detective to-day, for there was an enormous pressure of work, and the hands of every C. I. D. officer were always full. Naturally, we were always prepared for trouble, and sometimes we found it. I discovered, however, that it paid to act without thinking of such things. The faintest trace of irresolution might inspire resistance. On the other hand, few but the most desperate crooks would put up a fight against a determined officer.

Physical risks were not the only dangers we had to encounter, and it is as true now as then that any detective who merely does honestly the duty he is paid to perform may find himself in a position that may jeopardize his reputation and his career. An early case that caused me some sleepless nights comes to my mind.

"Wonderland," which afterwards became a well known boxing resort, was then a place of general entertainment. One day, while I was standing near the entrance, I noticed a fellow work his way from outside the crowd

to near the pay box and return again to the edge of the crowd. This happened three or four times, so I drew near and watched him closely. I was at his heels when, with the celerity of a conjuring trick, he took a woman's purse. I made a grab at his wrist and took the purse from him. There was a little commotion, and to my utter astonishment—I was younger, then—he calmly accused me of the theft. To add to my embarrassment the crowd believed him and were confirmed in their opinion when I dropped the purse in my pocket, for, naturally, I was anxious to run no risk of losing my only piece of corroborative evidence.

What with a hostile crowd, my prisoner, and the very agitated woman from whom the purse had been taken, I had some little difficulty in getting clear. I told myself that it would be all right at the station; but there again, with the most plausible air in the world, the prisoner repeated his accusation.

Worse was to come. Once more, before the magistrate, he gave his version with the lofty indignation of an injured man—and called witnesses to prove that he was in constant employment and a man of good character. He was committed for trial.

Conceive my position. It was his word against mine, and there was sworn evidence that he was a man of good reputation. I was a young and little known officer, and if he was to be believed, I had not only brought a false charge, but was a thief myself.

A very worried man was I. I was convinced that the fellow was no beginner, but to prove it, in those days before fingerprints, was not so simple. I put in every hour I could spare searching the photographic albums at Scotland Yard—known to the public as the Rogues' Gallery—but after three or four days all the faces began to look alike to me. I was almost in despair when, the very day before the Grand Jury sat at the North London Ses-

sions, I recognized his portrait. From that I was able to trace several previous convictions against him. Also I found that, more than once, after he had been caught practically red-handed, he had succeeded in bluffing magistrates with his supposed good character and had got away, while officers had been admonished for giving "reckless" evidence.

Considerably relieved, I got his identity verified by a prison warder and had him indicted for a previous conviction for felony before the case went before the Grand Jury. That showed him that it was useless to persist in his accusations against me. He thereupon pleaded guilty to the larceny and also to the previous conviction. I then gave the judge his criminal history, telling exactly what he was and what he had done. I saw no reason to tone down the circumstances. Sentence of eighteen months' hard labour was passed.

After I left the box the prosecuting counsel beckoned to me. "That was a pretty fierce 'jacketing,' " he said. "I don't think you should have rubbed it in so hard."

I am afraid I resented a little both the words and the tone of his reproof. Our altercation (carried on in undertones) attracted the attention of the Bench. The judge, Mr. McConnell, Q. C., a shrewd old gentleman, who probably guessed what the trouble was, asked what was happening. I at once returned to the box.

"Counsel seems to think, my lord," I explained, "that I have been too severe in telling what was known about the prisoner."

Mr. McConnell's eyes gleamed through his spectacles. "You were quite right in telling us all about the circumstances," he said. "The Court is entitled to know."

This sort of bold impudence is part of the stock-in-trade of many criminals, and the wise detective must always be prepared for it. While on the subject I recall one of the coolest pieces of cheek I ever witnessed. The

incident occurred some years later. I was at Leman Street Police Station when I received a message that I was urgently required in the first court at the County of London Sessions.

I hurried there and learned that a number of cases of receiving stolen goods were on the calendar. Two cases had already been heard. In both of them the guilt of the prisoners, on the evidence, so I was told, was flagrant and palpable. No one—the prisoners least of all—expected anything but a conviction. The first man, however, had been promptly acquitted. The vagaries of juries are sometimes inexplicable, and nothing, except perhaps stupidity, was suspected. The next trial opened before the same jury with the same result. It was then that I was sent for.

As my eyes fell on the foreman of the jury, the whole situation became clear to me. He was a gentleman who had passed through my hands and, as a result, had himself suffered a term of penal servitude for receiving stolen goods. How he had contrived to get himself elected foreman and to dominate the rest of the jury was a mystery. I explained the matter quietly to the judge, who immediately dismissed the jury and had a fresh one sworn in.

My friend, the foreman, passed me in the well of the court. "How are you, Mr. Wensley?" he greeted me cheerfully. "Why are we discharged?"

The more I saw of detective work, the more it fascinated me. There was about it an infinite variety that attracted me more than any sport or entertainment. Brain and body were constantly on the alert. I was out at all hours of the night and day, winter and summer alike. There are tricks in every trade and particularly in that of a detective. I believe I learned them all by experience. Do not misunderstand me. I could not then, and cannot now, miraculously deduce the author of a crime from a

piece of burnt matchstick, but I could at least say, often with reasonable certainty, who was the probable author of a crime by the circumstances in which it was carried out. I learned, also, what was more important, how to find proof and how to catch the criminal.

Pure reasoning is all very well, but the blood and bones of all practical detective work is information. That is to be got in a variety of ways, but the simplest is from informants. I realized that I had to get to know informants and to win their confidence. To that end I laid down one strict rule for myself—always to keep faith.

Of course, the use of informants—particularly informants who are criminals themselves—has obvious dangers, but anything in the nature of too close an intimacy is easily avoided by an intelligent man. I gradually formed acquaintanceships that enabled me to ask a seemingly casual question without arousing alarm or suspicion. Sometimes men or women would seek me out to tell me of a projected or accomplished crime. I never asked their motives, although I might guess—revenge, jealousy, spite, the mere desire to curry favour, or it might even be the attempt of a wife or close friend to prevent a man from reverting to evil ways. A great deal of this kind of information had to be scrutinized with close care, but there were always ways of checking its accuracy and value.

I made a minor sacrifice about this time. Until I joined the C. I. D. I had been a total abstainer. I found that to go into the haunts of some of these people and drink lemonade was to advertise myself. So, in that sense, I was driven to drink, though I usually made one, whether beer or whisky, last an uncommonly long time. I had to keep my mind clear.

Besides keeping in touch with informants and following up the hints I thus gained, I acquired the art of shadowing suspects—a matter not so simple as it sounds,

especially when a man has reason to fear that he is being kept under observation—and the still more difficult task of memorizing descriptions of persons circulated as wanted for offences.

Luck came my way. For a junior officer I acquired some reputation in the service as knowing—from a professional point of view—most people worth knowing. I was flattered by senior officers from other divisions frequently consulting me as to whether I knew this or that person who might have had a hand in some criminal exploit in their districts. Quite often I was able to indicate a probable culprit. I rarely appeared in these cases, but I made some good friends in the service.

Criminals, I early found, were human beings, and enthusiastic though I was, I never allowed myself to hunt them with any violent bitterness. I always tried to keep a perspective. As a professional crook once said to me, after I had laid hands on him, "If it wasn't for the like of us the like of you wouldn't be wanted."

The discerning detective is always liable to make a coup in the Sherlock Holmes manner, but an early experience of mine showed how essential it was in such cases that there should be no loophole.

A series of burglaries had been committed, all much in the same fashion. At the house where one of them had occurred we found on the window sill a very curious fancy button of foreign make. A few days later I met a man in the Whitechapel Road—a known criminal—wearing a waistcoat adorned with similar buttons. One was missing. I arrested him, and a few inquiries showed that the button had been missing since the night of the offense. Neither at the police court nor at the Sessions did the prisoner ask a single question nor make a single remark until, at the trial, the case for the prosecution had concluded. This was in the days before prisoners were entitled to go into the witness box on their own

behalf. Then the judge asked him, in the usual way, whether he had anything to say.

"Well, my lord," he replied, "all I want to ask the gentlemen of the jury is this: Did they ever see a button with two shanks? The shank of the button I lost is still on this waistcoat I am wearing. The button the police produced had a shank."

The evidence for the prosecution had finished and we could say nothing. The man was acquitted. As he left the court he jerked his head triumphantly at me. "Thought yourself clever, didn't you? I was too clever for you that time."

In fact, while he was on remand, he had induced a friend to procure a similar button for him, and, breaking off the shank, had sewn it on his waistcoat. Such a thing could not happen now, for the waistcoat would have been taken from him and made a court exhibit.

Against this I shall have to relate instances where the Sherlock Holmes faculty of observation has been sometimes valuable.

CHAPTER III

William Seaman—Murderer

ONCE in a while the life of a detective is illuminated by some lurid episode in striking contrast to its ordinary routine. These things usually happen unexpectedly. I had no notion that I should run up against rank melodrama one sunny Easter Saturday afternoon, in April, 1896.

For six months I had been, so to speak, an apprentice detective—that is to say, I had just finished that period of probation and become permanently attached to the Criminal Investigation Department. On that Saturday my chief thought was that I was hungry. I had waited for a friend who lived in the same house as I did—Harry Richardson—to come off point duty at one o'clock, and we were strolling along the Commercial Road, Whitechapel, when there reached us some incoherent story of trouble at a house in Turner Street—one of those mean thoroughfares that run between the Commercial Road and the Whitechapel Road.

We were young and in training, but fast as we moved a couple of other officers were in front of us. This we did not know till later in the day. But in those few minutes murder had been happening.

An excited crowd, rapidly swelling, had gathered outside a house at the corner of Turner Street and Varden Street. A hurried attempt to gain entrance at the street door proved futile. We rushed round to the back street, scaled a wall, and so made our way in from the rear, flinging open doors as we passed to examine the rooms.

One of these resisted as though someone were pushing

from the other side. I gave a curt order, "We are police! Come out!" and put my shoulder to the panel. The door gave way and I stumbled over the body of an old bearded Jew, still bleeding from dreadful wounds.

Palpably he was beyond all human help, and we thrust our way up the narrow stairs into a front bedroom. Here a woman was lying dead, amid a scene of terrible confusion. There were broken furniture, drawers turned out and their contents—dresses and toilet articles—scattered over the room, boxes broken open, and a litter of plaster over all.

Here I must interrupt my story to explain that the officers who had been before us had hurried away to report at the station and to fetch medical help. They had no idea that the murderer was still within reach. Indeed, in the haste and excitement of the moment they had failed to notice a gaping hole in the ceiling through which it was obvious the murderer must have escaped.

Even to-day, after thirty-four years, it is a miracle to me how that hole was made. A chair had been placed on the bed, but to reach the ceiling it must have been necessary for the man to have poised himself precariously on the bed-rail, and worked feverishly with a hammer to break away the lath and plaster.

We listened for a moment and heard sounds above us. Richardson, a fearless man of great resolution, was already throwing off his belt and tunic. "I'll go first," he insisted. "My helmet will show him who I am."

There was no time for argument. Standing on the bed I pushed him up and wriggled my way quickly after him. While I was doing this he groped his way forward under the sloping tiles to where another hole had been broken through to the roof. He crawled through this, and I followed.

I must have looked more like a tramp than a detective. I was covered with whitewash, soot, and dirt, and it was

small wonder that some of the people who saw me from the street mistook me for a companion of the murderer. This, incidentally, led to a story, extensively circulated for a time, that a confederate had succeeded in escaping over the roof. It also brought me into personal contact with Sir Melville Macnaghten, then chief constable of the Criminal Investigation Department, a fact which had some influence on my future career.

About fifteen feet away from us a big, black-bearded man was moving on the tiles. He saw us as we saw him and retreated towards the parapet. Richardson divined his intention.

"Look out! He's going to jump!" he cried.

There may have been times in my life when I have moved quicker but I don't recall them. I ran along and dropped through the hole in the roof, then along the rafters to the opening in the ceiling, through which I dropped in an avalanche of plaster. I took the stairs in two headlong leaps and, somehow, in a matter of seconds found myself among the crowd that was gaping upwards in Varden Street.

The murderer was already on the edge of the roof. He looked down at the crowd, some forty feet below, and then, placing one hand on the parapet, vaulted over. There was no possibility of avoiding some of the people beneath, and he may have counted on this to break his fall. Two or three people, in fact, were hurt, and when I flung myself forward to seize him I met with no resistance. He was unconscious. Among other injuries he had fractured an arm and a thigh.

I picked him up, and the crowd surged ominously round me. I have heard it said that a cry to lynch him was raised; but if so, I did not hear it. But I was aware of an ugly temper in the mob as some of us carried the insensible man back to the house, while other police officers fought to clear a way for us.

So far as I was concerned, the whole episode had happened at headlong rate. The small space of time in which the drama was enacted is made clear by the doctor, who arrived some minutes later and estimated that the old man had not then been dead more than a quarter of an hour.

Leaving my prisoner under guard in the little parlour until such time as he could be carried to a hospital, we began to search the house, and some of the details of a determined crime became apparent.

In a back bedroom were a bloodstained knife, a chisel, and an overcoat. Between the ceiling and the tiles was a man's cap with a hatpin in it. This had belonged to the dead woman, and she had been wearing it during the morning.

It is possible that the murderer had used the cap to carry away some of the loot and had discarded it when he could, with some degree of safety, stop to stuff some of the articles into his pockets.

Richardson had been busy on the roof and discovered a hammer, with the head broken away from the handle. Close by was a sovereign purse—those were the days of gold—and a few coins. When I joined him we saw that the murderer had apparently broken the hammer in an attempt to force a way back through the roof to another room—probably with some idea of trying to double back through the house when he heard us close at his heels.

A gold necklace and a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles had dropped from his pockets when he made his headlong leap, and, when his clothes were searched, they were found to contain an odd assortment of valuable and trumpery jewelry, which showed that he had been in too much haste to discriminate.

When, at last, swathed in bandages, and in a bed of the padded room at the London Hospital, the murderer

recovered consciousness, he flatly refused to give any account of himself, replying to all questions with a curt "Find out!" This was in the days before fingerprints, and, although we were sure we had probably got a man with a "record," we were unable immediately to identify him. We discovered that he had been living as William Saunders at Milwall, where he was supposed to be a sailor.

My immediate chief, Stephen White, the local detective inspector, had a look at him and was able to recount some fragments of his history, which were amplified by a glance at the records. He was a convict on license—a "ticket-of-leave man"—known to the Convict Supervision Office as William Seaman.

For a large part of my life I was thrown into close contact with some of the most desperate rogues in London. I have eaten with them, drunk with them, and mixed with them in every variety of circumstance. In my early days the kid-glove crook was rarer than he is now, and I knew plenty of men from whom the character of Bill Sikes might have been drawn—reckless, brutal, drunken scoundrels, with the instincts and ferocity of wild beasts of the jungle. Seaman was one of the most perfect examples of this type—the most truculent and repulsive desperado with whom I ever came in contact. I think he is the only man I ever met of whom I could honestly say that he had no single redeeming trait.

He had undergone sentences of penal servitude amounting to twenty-eight years. His final term—seven years—had been earned when he walked into a Whitechapel druggist's shop and asked for the loan of a hammer. The proprietor, singularly unsuspicious, handed him the tool and was at once felled with a smashing blow on the head. While he lay unconscious the shop was rifled.

Seaman—whose real name I believe was William

King—was caught almost immediately. He had finished his sentence and been at large some months when the episode at Turner Street occurred.

His victims had been John Goodman Levy, a Jew, seventy-seven years old, and his housekeeper, Mrs. Sarah Gale, a woman of thirty-five, who were the only occupants of the house in Turner Street. On that Easter Saturday Mrs. Lawton, a relative of Levy's, had been invited to their midday meal. Failing to obtain a reply to her repeated knocks, she had spoken to a neighbour, who, peering over the back fence, saw a strange and sinister figure prowling about the place.

On the face of it this was a commonplace case of murder and robbery, and since Seaman was taken practically in the act, there would have been little point in pressing extensive inquiries on all sorts of absurd rumours that arose. We were unable to obtain any shred of information that linked up Seaman with either Levy or Mrs. Gale or their friends at any date before the crime.

While he was being nursed back to health the murderer became more communicative, but no reliance could be put on anything he said. He was a determined liar and contradicted himself on many details. One little passage occurred when the woman at whose house he had a room was taken to identify him.

"Is it possible," she asked, "that you have done such a terrible crime?"

"I did do it," he retorted surlily; and when she pressed him for his reason he added, "Revenge! He did me the greatest injustice one man can do another!"

"Why, was that woman your wife?" she asked.

"No," he replied, and at this point the officers in charge stopped any more questions.

Seaman faced the almost certain prospect of the gallows with cynical unconcern. Some weeks before, an old man had been murdered by burglars at Muswell Hill.

He took a particular interest in this case and demanded an evening paper. When this was denied him he offered to bet the officers who guarded him that "neither they nor their superintendent" had any right to refuse his request. He did not know the two men—Fowler and Milsom—who were concerned in this case, one of whom, Fowler, was very much of the same type as himself. In fact, they were arrested about this time, tried at the same Sessions as himself, and he was ultimately hanged between them. But I am getting ahead of my story.

No picture that I can present of this man reveals him more completely than one of the accounts he himself gave of the crime.

> I have been a frequent visitor to Turner Street where the job was done, and if the —— old Jew had given me the seventy pounds he owed me the job would not have happened.
>
> You don't know the half what there has been between old Levy and me . . . and I will keep it to myself. You don't know what I have had to put up with from the two ——; but this finishes the lot.
>
> That morning I knocked at the door, old Levy himself answered it and I walked in. He said the girl was upstairs. I then went upstairs and found her in her own bedroom. . . . When she saw me she shouted and began struggling, but I soon stopped her kicking. I then came downstairs and soon put the old Jew's lights out.
>
> After the job was finished I heard someone keep knocking at the door. I stood behind the door wondering whether to let them in or not. If I had opened the door I would soon have floored them so as they would not have walked out of that house again alive—they would have been carried out stiff with the others.
>
> I then got on the roof from the inside, and saw my

only chance was to dive down off the roof head first. If it had not been for someone breaking my fall I should not have been lying in here. But there it is. Everyone has to die some time. I know I am going to get hung and would not care if it was now, for I am tired of my life.

Many parts of this statement proved, when tested, to be purposeless lies. For instance, there was no indication of a struggle or trace of blood in Mrs. Gale's own room, as there must have been had she been killed there. Nor did Seaman dive head first from the roof. He vaulted over, relying, as he said in another conversation, on the crowd of adjectived Jews to break his fall.

The suggestion that Levy was a receiver of stolen goods was conveyed to us in an anonymous letter, as well as by the vague implications in Seaman's statement. Not a single scrap of information that we gathered supported this theory. He was an orthodox Jew of good reputation.

The murder happened on the Jewish Sabbath, and if Seaman had known Levy at all well he would not have attempted any business with him on that day. Even assuming that he *did* go to see Levy, the most he could have hoped for was a promise to deal with any affair between them at some other time. He would scarcely have required to take a hammer and knife to obtain this.

My personal view is that he went there to murder first and to rob afterwards, and that he felt he had a reasonable chance of getting away unobserved. Indeed, if he had left the house a few minutes before Mrs. Lawton arrived to keep her appointment he might well have got clear away. Nothing that we learned would have indicated him as the murderer. If ever there was any connection between the occupiers of 31 Turner Street and Seaman it must remain a mystery.

As soon as he had recovered sufficiently he was charged

at the Thames Police Court. I remember that he became very angry at the sight of the old suit of clothes we had provided for him—his own were bloodstained and were to be used as evidence. He wanted to appear "respectable." Eventually we got a new blue suit from "Alf" Valentine, who was quite a character among Petticoat Lane dealers, and with this Seaman was satisfied.

Although so weak that he had to be carried into court in an armchair, he remained fiercely aggressive; nor was he in any degree cowed when he went before that stern judge, Mr. Justice Hawkins, at the Old Bailey. Contemptuously he refused to accept the help of counsel. He sneered when he asked questions about the dead woman, and he sneered when Richardson told of the pursuit to the roof. I give one little interlude that occurred when an officer read the statement I have quoted.

Seaman: The whole of your evidence is a fabrication. Either I'm a madman to make such a statement or you're a rogue. You've been sworn on the Bible, but they ought to have sworn you on a pack of cards.

Mr. Justice Hawkins: Do you want to ask any more questions?

Seaman: No. He's the greatest liar I have ever had in front of me. He's a disgrace to the police force.

Really there was no pretense of a defense. Seaman nonchalantly remarked that he had nothing to say about the case, but complained bitterly of things said about him by the newspapers.

He was found guilty and sentenced to death. As the judge concluded the usual solemn formula with the words, ". . . and may the Lord have mercy on your soul," the prisoner shrugged his shoulders.

"Well," he remarked, "I hope the Lord will have

more mercy on my soul than I have had on my body. I have not had much mercy on that."

The following day began the trial of the two men, Fowler and Milsom, for the murder at Muswell Hill which Seaman had been so anxious to read about. I had nothing to do with this case, but it stands out in my mind because of the most remarkable scene I have ever witnessed in a criminal court.

Each had tried to put the blame for the crime on the other. Fowler, a giant of a man, enormously strong, who feared nothing and nobody and had been arrested in a desperate affray only after he had been knocked out with the butt of a revolver, had sworn vengeance on Milsom—a mean and cowardly member of the underworld. It was after a three days' trial, when the jury had retired to consider their verdict, that he saw his opportunity. He leapt suddenly on Milsom, and, but for the quickness of a warder, who seized and clung to one arm, he would have throttled the other there and then.

The three fell in a struggling heap, and other warders and police officers rushed to help. Milsom, screaming with fright, was extricated and rushed out of harm's way down the dock steps. Fowler fought on furiously, like some wild beast beset by hounds. Several men were clinging to him—there was no room for others of us who, attracted by the uproar, had gathered round the dock expecting them to topple through its stout wooden panels every instant.

With a superhuman effort Fowler regained his feet, and, striking fiercely, carried his assailants from one side of the dock to the other. Every bit of glass which bordered the dock was shattered. For twelve minutes—it seemed much longer—he fought against odds, but at last they pinned him to the floor and managed to get handcuffs upon him.

He was carried below, and presently the two murder-

ers, strongly guarded, were brought up to hear the verdict and sentence. As Milsom made whining protestations of innocence Fowler mimicked him and laughed insolently as the death sentence was pronounced.

As I have said, Fowler, Milsom and Seaman were executed together. This was the last triple execution to take place in London. A story, which I believe to be an invention, was current that, as Seaman was placed on the scaffold between the others, he remarked, "Well, this is the first time in my life I've ever had to act as a blinking peacemaker."

In all, that week I saw four persons condemned to death by Mr. Justice Hawkins. The other was Mrs. Dyer, a baby-farmer, who "adopted" children for a cash consideration and was proved to have murdered many of them. There was a curious informality in the circumstances of her execution, for she was the only person in my recollection who was ever removed to another prison and afterward returned to a condemned cell. Usually the terms of the death sentence are strictly adhered to—". . . you will be taken hence to the place from which you came and thence to a place of lawful execution. . . ." I cannot remember whether the judge varied the phrasing. The carrying-out of the sentence on the three men was fixed for the ninth of June and that of Mrs. Dyer for the following day. She was removed to another prison till after the triple execution and brought back to Newgate to suffer her own fate.

CHAPTER IV

Sir Melville Macnaghten

IT WAS the Seaman affair that first brought me into personal touch with Sir Melville Macnaghten. It began an understanding between us that was of immense value to me. I am proud to think that he remained my friend long after he had ceased to be my chief, and that I was among those whom he wished to see during that long and painful illness, so gallantly borne, which resulted in his death.

He was then chief constable of the Criminal Investigation Department, and his visit to Whitechapel was caused by the rumour, to which I have referred, that a confederate of the murderer had escaped from the roof of 31 Turner Street. Quite unexpectedly he strolled into the Leman Street Police Station, and it happened that I was the only C. I. D. officer there at the time. So it was to me that he turned, and I was able to explain the whole matter to him. Thereafter I knew how it was that this tall, charming-mannered man had managed to win and keep the respect and devotion of all kinds of men in all ranks of the service. With fine tact he said just the right things in just the right way to impress a young detective officer, and asked me to accompany him to the house.

There a trivial incident occurred which he many times later recalled to me with a chuckle. A little Jew, a relative of the murdered man, was in charge of the house. To him my immediate chief, Detective Inspector White, had delivered portentous instructions that no one, "not even the commissioner himself," was to be admitted except by White's definite orders.

The Jew had taken this very seriously and literally. So there was I, with one of the highest officials in the service, held up by a determined and voluble Jew and in imminent danger of being routed. My arguments, my explanations, were waved aside, and the amused chief constable thoroughly enjoyed the little interlude. My persistency won at last, although it was clear that the little Jew still had grave doubts as he stood aside to let us in.

Incidentally I was rapped over the knuckles by my local inspector for causing his orders to be disregarded, but I had gained a firm friend. Ever after, Sir Melville showed almost a paternal interest in my work. No doubt he gave the same impression to others, for he always had the knack of drawing the best from a man. Even that little intimate touch "Fred," instead of the official "Mr. Wensley," on occasions when we were alone together in after years, when he had become assistant commissioner, was calculated to give a human and inspiring tone to our relationship. He was a very great gentleman, and I owe much to him.

After nearly three years in the C. I. D., during which I felt I had done good work, I became a little restive. I had passed the necessary examinations and was qualified for promotion, but I was more than once passed over. Taking my courage in both hands, I approached the local detective inspector. I should preface this by explaining that, as a general practice, promotion in the service is followed by transfer to a different division.

My chief was not sympathetic. "It's no use coming to me," he said bluntly. "I shan't recommend you. I'm not going to have you transferred after I've taught you all you know. You must wait till a vacancy occurs in this division."

A great light came to me. On this line of reasoning the

better my work the more useful I became, and the less likely to gain promotion.

I went to the superintendent of the division—not my old friend Dodd, who had gone by this time. He shook his head, and, in effect, observed that any action on his part might be considered as a slight on the local inspector.

"Very well, sir," I said, "I will appeal to Scotland Yard."

"If you want to take the risk," he retorted. "It's a daring thing to do."

No one knew better than I did that it was a daring thing—whatever my technical rights—to go over the heads of my immediate superiors. But I insisted, and finally I laid my case before Sir Melville Macnaghten. He cut the knot in his own way, and I was promoted, the same day, to detective sergeant, to remain "overstrength" in the H Division. Thus everyone was satisfied.

Although my promotion made some difference to my standing, the only effect it had in other ways was, if anything, to increase my work. To recount all the cases in which I took a hand during the next few years would swell this volume to undue limits.

There was a great variety to the work. One evening a young man was carried to the London Hospital with a bullet wound in his neck and £51 in gold in his pockets. The assailant had been seized and taken to a police station in another division, but news of the affair soon came to me. I rather wondered about that £51. It seemed a lot of money for a young gangster to have. So I turned up *Informations* and found that a jeweller's shop in Old Street, Shoreditch, had been robbed a day or two before. I had the impression that the wounded man might know something about it. If my guess was right, one of his confederates would be along to collect that money ere long.

I strolled round to the London Hospital and, sure

enough, in a little time a young man who said he was the patient's brother arrived and asked for the coat in which the money had been found. This was refused. He went away and returned with a woman whom he introduced as the injured man's wife. She also claimed the coat, and it was given to her.

As they came out of the hospital gates I was ostentatiously gaping up at the windows. "Who's that fellow they shot?" I asked them.

"He's my brother," explained the man.

I fell absently into step with the pair and continued to ask questions. They may have taken me for one of those street busybodies always interested in other folks' troubles, or perhaps they believed that I was a newspaper man. They did not resent my curiosity and told me as much as they thought good for me.

The talk continued till we drew opposite the door of the police station. Then I unexpectedly pushed the man inside and revealed my identity. Quite readily he admitted that he had got the £51. According to him it had been entrusted to his brother to buy some cloth for a tailoring business. But he boggled when I asked from whom the cloth was to have been bought. His tale was much too fishy, and I arrested him for being in the possession of money that had been stolen.

Then, bit by bit, we got together rather a curious story. The injured man, his brother, and his assailant were all members of a gang of six burglars. One of them had been left out of the Old Street robbery, and as soon as he heard of it he demanded his "corner." A violent argument was ended when he was driven off at the point of a couple of revolvers. Forth he went to get a revolver himself. Meanwhile, another of the gang had got together a few toughs—"hired bullies" in his own words—to teach the malcontent a lesson. They found their man, but he

was too quick with his pistol. Their leader was shot through the neck, and the others dispersed.

It was an odd fact that, although we knew every one of the five men who had taken part in the burglary—all professional criminals capable of any violence—we were unable to get any legal proof against them. They were determined, by hook or by crook, to get hold of that £51; we were equally determined that they should not. We were not very surprised when the man I had arrested was discharged—incidentally the fellow who fired the pistol got nine months—but the magistrate refused to make any order to return the money, and we hung onto it. After some futile proceedings at Bow Street they threatened to carry the matter to the High Court. We countered that by getting an order that they should guarantee costs—a matter of about £200. They hesitated to take the risk, and the matter dropped. They had been outwitted and they never got the money.

Some very interesting work arose from a melodramatic affair that caused some excitement in 1901. An elderly manufacturing jeweller was about to lock up his office one evening, after his staff had left, when a well dressed man, wearing a hat that shaded his face, entered the place, and with the air and assurance of one engaged upon legitimate business, asked to be shown the works of some watches.

Cox readily and unsuspiciously went into the business. While his attention was thus engaged two men, their faces hidden by masks of black crêpe, rushed in. Cox had little opportunity to resist or chance to cry for help. A handkerchief was thrust into his mouth, another was tied round his eyes, he was tied to the banisters and warned that if he kept still nothing worse would happen to him. Poor chap, he had little choice. They took from him the keys of the safe, and, after leisurely helping themselves to gold watches, gold rings, and every other portable

article of value that they could lay their hands on, they departed.

Had Cox been a less hardy old man the business might well have resolved itself into a case of murder. He was seventy-one years old, and I have known younger people succumb to a less severe ordeal than that to which the thieves intended he should be exposed. The probabilities were that he would have remained bound and gagged for twelve or fourteen hours. As it was, by severe exertions he managed to free himself after a while and went to inform the local police.

His story sounded a trifle fantastic. On the face of it, it was uncommonly close to yarns that are frequently related in the case of bogus robberies, and the divisional detective inspector was a little doubtful of the genuineness of the outrage.

We, in common with the rest of the C. I. D., were told to keep our eyes open. Since, however, the affair had happened in another division, we were not specially concerned except for the possibility that some of our local practitioners had been mixed up in it. Nevertheless, we missed no chance of pushing inquiries. In a little, one of our men—Brogden, the son of a chief constable of Yarmouth, and a man of great detective ability—got a hint through some subterranean channel that one of Cox's employees had acted in collusion with the thieves. This —if a robbery had indeed taken place—was not at all unlikely, and we became more intensely interested in the investigation. Then there came word of a bunch of rogues who had plunged into a riot of extravagant enjoyment. This was a long way from proving anything against them, but we hoped that, if we moved fast, we might, with luck, get them before they had got rid of their loot.

Brogden was not told too much. Informants generally hint rather than speak plainly. If they talk too freely

they know there is always the chance that the people they have betrayed will know from whom the information came.

All we knew was that some of the suspects had been seen in the neighbourhood of Clapham Park. Thither we went, and after a tedious vigil saw one of our men strolling with his son in the Clapham Park Road. We shadowed them till the father entered a house in a neighbouring square. Tactics were quickly arranged. When the older man emerged and joined his son—who was carrying a set of housebreaking tools at the time—they were allowed to walk some distance away before they were arrested.

Meanwhile, other officers rushed the house and secured the occupier. In the first shock of surprise, and in spite of a warning, he gave himself away.

"N. has 'shopped' us," he declared. "It looks bad for me, as I have a lot of the stuff. It was not me who gagged Mr. Cox."

That was enough. N. was the employee whom we already suspected, although we had not yet fully decided what action to take in his case.

As it happened, each member of the gang was unable to imagine how we had tracked them, and each suspected some other member of betrayal. Naturally we said nothing. From things they let slip we were able to locate another of the burglars at Kennington—this was the man who had posed as a customer—and at two o'clock in the morning another at Lambeth.

A ruse was arranged to make sure of N. We used the name of one of our prisoners in a telegram that was dispatched to him, fixing a time and a spot for a meeting. Sure enough, N. turned up, and although he denied having received the wire—he admitted that he knew one of the men we had in custody. We arrested him, and afterwards were able to trace out such a close connection with

the thieves as to leave no doubt of the treacherous part he had played.

Although there was nothing to be said in his favour, by a legal technicality he could not be given more than two years' imprisonment. Mr. Justice Jelf emphasized his regret that the sentence had to be so light. Of our other prisoners only the three men who had actually been present at the robbery were put on trial. All were shrewd, clever criminals with bad records. One was sentenced to twelve years' and the others to ten years' penal servitude each.

This, in one sense, was an exceptional case. It marked a change that had been gradually coming over the methods of the C. I. D. The offense had taken place in one division; the thieves were located in other divisions; but they were run down by detectives from still another division.

When I joined, an officer, except by definite instructions, was scarcely ever permitted to go outside his own division. The result was that criminals living in one district could, almost with impunity, commit crime in others.

It was truly remarkable how long it took to overcome the opposition to any change that was manifested by superintendents of divisions and the older C. I. D. officers. They were actuated by two different motives. A divisional superintendent did not like officers leaving his district to operate in another; and a local detective inspector resented detectives from other districts "poaching" on his division. He would hint pretty broadly that if he wanted their aid he would apply for it.

Broader views and wider visions slowly permeated the service. It became tacitly recognized that an officer should be allowed to follow inquiries in other divisions than his own. This showed itself so clearly to be beneficial to the service that an experiment was tried on a small scale by sending detectives direct from the Yard in pursuit of

offenders. Under the late Chief Inspector Fred Fox, a small body of men was organized to hunt down coiners. Later, the idea was extended to other criminals, but it did not meet altogether with the success that was expected. The root of the trouble was that young officers were sent out without effective supervision or guidance, and ultimately the scheme lapsed. Many years afterwards I took some part in the creation of a more elastic system of criminal investigation. Then it was that I recalled the old experiments and their defects. In them, however, lay the germ from which was evolved what the newspapers called the Big Four and the Flying Squad.

CHAPTER V

The Career of Bertha Weiner

ALTHOUGH I have run down all kinds of burglars and house breakers, including some of the most notorious practitioners in that art, I do not think that any effort of mine in that direction ever gave me more satisfaction than an episode that occurred in 1901, when I was a detective sergeant.

This was the breaking up of one of the biggest and most systematic burglarious organizations that I have ever known, headed, oddly enough, by a middle-aged German woman named Bertha Weiner, whose ability and cunning have rarely been matched by any criminal of her sex. She had a real genius for generalship, and operations that were planned by her lacked no detail in completeness, from the conception of a robbery to the disposal of the stolen property in a manner least calculated to arouse suspicion. Working with her, and more or less under her control and supervision, was a gang of twelve men, most of whom were also German.

The campaign they carried out with considerable success for a time was mostly directed against big suburban houses standing in their own grounds. The most promising of these were carefully selected, the habits of the occupants studied, and the neighbourhood carefully surveyed beforehand. So meticulous were they that suitable routes to and from the spot were invariably plotted on a road map. The actual work of the robbery would be allotted to a group of four or five men, each of whom was given a defined task.

On these lines they managed to make a fairly comfortable living. House after house was robbed with impunity, and they became a perfect menace in the suburban districts. Beyond the fact that some bold and clever gang was at work there was nothing that could be seized upon as a clue. That there was a considerable number of them engaged was apparent, for they had more than once been seen, although usually in darkness and in circumstances that made it impossible to identify any of them.

For the local police to do anything effectively was almost out of the question. Only a very determined police officer meeting a number of stalwart men late at night in a lonely district, perhaps miles away from help, would have dared to question them. To the credit of the uniformed men this did happen once or twice, but on such occasions the policemen usually got hurt, while the thieves always escaped. I do not doubt that they were also seen by other more discreet officers less disposed—they can scarcely be blamed—to face hopeless odds.

Reports of these robberies reached us from all directions, but it did not seem as if we should be directly affected, for none of these offenses occurred anywhere near our division.

Here, then, was a mysterious sequence of burglaries with never a clue. Everyone was, for the time being, baffled. As it happened, I was able to clear up the business, although when the idea that brought about the exposure of Mrs. Weiner's wide and cunning operations came to me I had no idea myself of where it would lead.

There came a day when I passed a group of men in one of the Shadwell streets. I had seen some of them about before but had paid no special attention to them, for I had never suspected them of any definite crime. Now, however, it flashed across my mind that they appeared to have a considerable amount of leisure and always appeared to be amply provided with funds. How

did they live? I thought the matter over while I settled the business I had in hand, and resolved that I would look further into it. The thing might turn out to be a wild-goose chase, for it was possible, after all, that they were perfectly honest men, but still——

To gain any information about them was not quite so simple as might be supposed. They were Germans—a clannish race—and kept very much to themselves. There were, I soon found, at least a dozen of them, more or less associated, but living in different parts of the East End. My first step was to find out where they lived and when they met. After a little trouble and some delicate shadowing I located a small four-roomed house in Albert Street, Shadwell. Here the majority of them lived, off and on, although now and again I would miss some one or the other of them for a day or two at a time. At this stage I became more confident than ever that they were engaged in some nefarious pursuit. But to find out what it was and get evidence was quite a different thing.

The days grew into weeks and the weeks into months. I spent much time in haunting Albert Street in various guises at all hours of the day and night. The aid of some of my colleagues was enlisted, but it seemed as if we should never catch our quarry off their guard.

Of course, they and their visitors were shadowed at times—not persistently, for that would sooner or later have disclosed to them that they were under suspicion and have made them still more wary.

One of these visitors was the German woman, Bertha Weiner, who, I found, paid the rent of the house in Albert Street. She herself lived about a mile away, in rooms at Ship Alley, with a seaman named Rebork. On occasion she had been accompanied by her brother Ludwig Weiner and his two sons, who were supposed to be auctioneers, and lived at Tredegar Square, Bow.

As time went on, the inference that these people were

an organized band of thieves and receivers became irresistible. There was, however, scarcely a shred of legal proof. Many attempts were made by myself and others to get into contact with someone who could give us a hint of the secrets of the gang. This was far from easy. As I have said, they were a clannish lot. Quite apart from their natural caution, most of them knew but little English and spoke mainly in some obscure German dialect.

It was a severe test of patience, but finally I managed to gain the confidence of a woman who knew a great deal about them and, although I had to feel my way very cautiously, I soon gathered enough to show me that these were probably the very people who were causing our colleagues in the more genteel suburbs so much trouble. The various functions of the gang became roughly defined. Bertha Weiner was the financier and mainspring. The actual burglars were the men who occupied the house in Albert Street, who worked in gangs of four or five. They got rid of the more commonplace articles to the woman, and she had an arrangement with the other Weiners for the disposal of the more valuable goods. Of course, all these people were acting in the closest cooperation.

A council of war was held with my immediate chiefs at which we discussed our course of action. It was decided to make swift raids on each of the haunts of the gang, at a time when we were fairly certain that we should find stolen property somewhere, and to make our arrests so that no group of the criminals should have a chance of warning any other group.

A day was fixed for this coup—October 28th. Twenty-four hours before, however, news came to me that my father was very seriously ill. I sought and obtained leave in order to visit him, and the raid was postponed. Luck was on our side. Somehow or other a suspicion of our

plan had reached the ears of the gang. Had it been carried out on the date originally fixed it would have been a fiasco. Every scrap of evidence had been removed or hidden, and we should have raised an alarm to no purpose.

When nothing happened on the twenty-eighth the burglars evidently came to the conclusion that they had been unduly nervous and scared by shadows. The very next night they carried out a carefully planned robbery at a house in Willesden. Windows and doors had been forced, and there were signs that they had spent many hours in systematically and deliberately ransacking the place. All was fish that came to their net. Not content with a haul of valuable silver they had broken into the wine cellar, and even helped themselves to portions of the owner's wardrobe.

In the dark hours of the morning of October 31st, several of us swooped on the house in Albert Street that I had spent so many tedious hours in watching. Eight astonished men were aroused from their sleep, told to dress, and taken away under arrest. So hurried and bewildered were they that one put on a pair of men's stockings that was part of the plunder from Willesden, and another donned a stolen hat.

Leaving them and the house in charge of other officers, with Detective Inspector Divall, then chief of the C. I. D. officers in the division, I hurried off to Ship Alley. At our knock the street door was opened by a girl, and we pushed by her to an inner room. I put my shoulder to the panel of this door, and we burst in upon Bertha Weiner and Rebork.

Almost simultaneously other officers had dashed to the house in Tredegar Square. They were just in time. A moving van was stopped as it was on the point of leaving and was found to contain quite a large quantity of stolen

property and a still larger amount which they could not satisfactorily account for. Inside the house were Ludwig Weiner and his two sons, who were detained till Divall and I arrived. The whole affair was one of the neatest pieces of work in which I ever took part. Everything went like clockwork, and the whole of the gang—twelve men and one woman—were in custody before they were aware that we were about to pounce.

Ere we had finished, events had gone our way at the police station. The eight men who had already been taken there were unaware that an officer who was present while they were awaiting the taking of the charge against them was a man with a very complete acquaintance with the German language. While the formalities were being completed they conversed freely, under the impression that they could not be understood. Here are some scraps of the conversation.

1*st Man:* I think the old woman will hold her tongue for her own sake. Anyhow, neither of us has sold her anything (*warningly*)—you understand that, don't you? I hope they won't find the other stuff in the hole under the table and the lot under the stone. I say, Hauten, they will see the holes in the doors where you practised with your drills.

2*d Man:* Yes, we left them behind and I suppose they have found them.

3*d Man* (*apprehensively*)*:* Look here, it is no good talking. We must deny everything and hold our tongues.

4*th Man:* I expect they will find the music box at the old woman's and the marine glasses.

2*d Man:* Let me see. The yellow silk handkerchief, the two tablecloths, and the umbrellas all come from the same place, so, as it stands, they have only one case against us.

Only when this conversation was repeated in evidence did they realize how they had given themselves away. It was, indeed, to be expected that in so large a gang some of them would talk a little too freely, and one of the Weiners was very loquacious as I took him to the station in a cab.

From our point of view, however, there was little occasion to rely on any admissions they might make. We had, in the most literal sense, as the American phrase has it, caught them with the goods on them. In the various places we raided we found an enormous quantity of stolen property and spent more than two days in tracing the people to whom it belonged. Thus we were able to connect the gang with thirty-six burglaries—although that may not have been the full tale of their offenses. Incidentally, among their tools we found a chisel that exactly fitted the marks made in breaking into the Willesden house.

There was an entertaining little story in connection with one piece of property. This was a jewelled badge that had been presented by his brother magistrates to Sir Montagu Sharpe, then, I think, the deputy chairman of the Middlesex Sessions. It was a unique decoration and had taken the fancy of one of the gang, a man named Wald, who called himself a professional wrestler. He had worn it during various visits to Germany, boasting to his friends that it had been presented to him for his prowess in a great British wrestling tournament. We ran across a photograph of him taken with it displayed prominently on his chest.

Big as was the dock at the Old Bailey, it was crowded when the thirteen prisoners with their guards were placed in it. I do not think that so large a number had ever before stood there at the same time. All were found guilty. Eleven were sent to five years' penal servitude each. One of the younger Weiners got off with twelve months'. Ber-

tha Weiner, who undoubtedly had supervised the operations of the gang, was sentenced to seven years' penal servitude.

I should have hated to be within their reach when sentence was passed. A battle of violent and incoherent threats against me broke out, and some of the more desperate struggled to break from the grip of the warders to get at me. The fight went on for quite a while, and a bunch of big policemen had to be called to the help of the prison officials to get the men out of the dock and into the prison van.

CHAPTER VI

Murder of a Newsagent

MISS EMILY FARMER was a dumpy, fat, little old woman who ran a small newsagent's and tobacconist's shop in the Commercial Road, Stepney. She lived alone, and in the afternoon, when things were quiet, loved to adorn herself with four or five rings, a couple of bracelets, a long gold chain round her neck, attached to a watch tucked in at her waistband, and a pair of gold pince-nez, also secured by a hanging gold chain.

All this display was, perhaps, very foolish in such a neighbourhood, where there were plenty of eager and reckless rogues alert for opportunities. But Miss Farmer was an obstinate old lady and would take no warning. She could, she asserted, take care of herself. Even a narrow escape from being sandbagged, when the police, alarmed by her screams, frightened away an intruder, did not shake her determination. She would not even prefer a charge against the man we suspected of making the attack.

At a quarter to six every morning she would be roused by the knock of the wholesale newsagent's messenger and would rise to take in the daily newspapers. This routine was followed on Wednesday, October 12, 1904, and at half-past six an errand boy whom she employed arrived. The door was open. A heavy bundle of newspapers, still tied up apparently as they had been delivered, was on the floor of the shop, but Miss Farmer, for some unusual reason, was not in the little parlour ready to start business. Nor did she reply when the boy called her. He

noticed her false teeth and one of her shoes lying in front of the counter and, a little disturbed, put them in a box. His alarm grew as time went on, and towards eight o'clock a policeman was fetched.

Then Miss Farmer was found, lying face down on the bed in her room on the first floor. Her hands were tied behind her back with string, and a piece of rag used as a gag had choked her.

With Tom Divall, then the divisional detective inspector, and other officers I went to the shop. The method and motive of the crime were apparent almost at a glance. The bedroom had been hastily ransacked. Clothing, books, boxes, and the contents of drawers were all over the place. On the stairs was the broken half of a pair of pince-nez, and I found the second piece on the floor of the shop. The string with which her hands were tied was similar to that used for securing newspaper bundles. The back door and all the windows were still fastened. We could find none of her jewelry, nor a penny of money.

All this pointed to her having been suddenly and unexpectedly attacked in the shop, possibly by people whom she knew and from whom she had not expected violence. She must have been overpowered almost immediately, for no one had heard any screams, and then carried to her room, where she was not likely to be discovered till after the robbers had ransacked the place. That at least two men were concerned was clear, for it was scarcely possible that one person could have dealt with the woman so swiftly as to prevent any outcry and have carried her upstairs by himself. There were no fingerprints, nor anything that we could fasten on in the way of a clue. The chances were, of course, that the murder was the work of habitual criminals, but even that supposition scarcely limited the field, for, within a stone's throw, there were a number of common lodging houses where people of this class were as thick as trees in a wood.

For a day or two we plugged along without getting hold of any reliable evidence. There are always special difficulties in an investigation into a case of this kind in a low-class neighbourhood. Liars, deliberate or inadvertent, are liable to cause waste of time on false scents; and there is the reluctance of certain persons who may have vitally important information which they are afraid to disclose for fear of what may afterwards be done to them by friends of the people involved. We had experience of both in this case.

One boy gave a circumstantial account of having seen a man about thirty leave Miss Farmer's shop in the early morning, after hanging about for several minutes. The man's departure had seemed hasty, and he had immediately jumped on a passing tramcar. It cost us some time and trouble to find that this was moonshine.

Naturally, we also turned our attention to the discovery of any persons who might have been seen loitering near the shop. Hanging about street corners was not an unusual custom for some of the toughs of the neighbourhood, and we heard of many, some of them known to us, some unknown. Three men who had undoubtedly been idling in the vicinity on the evening before the murder were brought to the police station and detained. Nothing could be learned from them, and we let two of them go. The other happened to be a convict on license, wanted by a provincial police force for failing to report. We kept him.

The news that three men had been detained leaked into the papers. On the Friday a man walked into the station and demanded to see Detective Inspector Divall.

"Those people you have detained are perfectly innocent," he declared.

Divall shrugged his shoulders and asked one or two questions. He gathered that a fellow employee of this visitor—who was a fish curer engaged on night work—

had actually seen two men, whom he could describe, come out of Miss Farmer's shop at about the time the murder had taken place.

The detective inspector sent for me, and we went along to this other fellow—a young man named Rae. The reason why he had so far remained silent was soon apparent. He lived in Old Church Road, quite near to Miss Farmer's shop, and after knocking off work on the morning of the murder, had stood for a while waiting for a friend immediately outside the shop. Two men emerged, both of whom he recognized as members of a gang of ne'er-do-wells who haunted the district, although he did not know their names. This was about five minutes before Miss Farmer's shop boy arrived; indeed, Rae had still been there when the lad took down the shutters.

When the story of the crime became known he told this story to his mother and some of his intimate friends and was advised not to mix himself up in the case. There was no intention in his mind of sheltering criminals, but his position was not easy, for he was little more than a boy in a neighbourhood where he would have been almost hourly at the mercy of any gangsters against whom he had given information. However, when we promised him protection he, somewhat reluctantly, told us what he knew.

Although no names were given, his descriptions carried us a long way. They tallied with those of two men —half-brothers—who had passed through our hands on several occasions and were associated with many local criminals. They were known as Conrad Donovan (his real name was Rotten) and Charles Wade. Wade was none other than the man we believed to have previously made an assault on Miss Farmer, when she was warned of the peril of her lonely life.

We had at last a tangible avenue of inquiry; but for the moment it all hung on the recollection and unsup-

ported word of one person. Swift inquiries had to be made to obtain, if possible, some confirmation of his story, but it was in the highest degree essential that the most stringent secrecy should be observed. Not only was there the possibility of flight—there would not have been much trouble in getting away to sea—but if either Donovan or Wade got a hint that they were suspected it would have been a fairly simple matter for them to concoct an alibi that would have been almost impossible to break, or to have brought to bear inducements, either by threat or persuasion, that would have resulted in the suppression or alteration of possible evidence. For these reasons it was determined that the arrests of both men should be simultaneous, and that at the same time, as nearly as possible, all their relations and friends who might know something of their movements should be interviewed.

All this, of course, was a matter of delicate organization. They were men of uncertain habits, and in any case likely to be on the alert. Both were known at times to visit their mother, who lived in the Commercial Road, and occasionally to sleep at her house. Each of them, however, had other addresses, and we felt that it might be a difficult thing to locate both at a given time. After a conference at Scotland Yard we decided to have all likely places quietly covered and to bring off our coup in the early hours of Sunday morning, which was when they would be least likely to expect us.

Meanwhile, armed with the descriptions of the two men, we were able to discover other people who had seen them at various times watching Miss Farmer's shop. This tended to increase our belief that we were on the right track, though it was, after all, very slender evidence.

On the Saturday morning Sam Lee and another officer who were watching the house of the mother saw Wade and a girl enter hurriedly. For half an hour or so the de-

tectives waited on events. Then, slowly and cautiously, the street door opened. The girl came to the doorstep and, looking up and down the roadway, signalled to a man peering from behind the door to keep back. They saw a figure dash into the obscurity of the passage; then the door closed. Some passer-by had alarmed her.

A few minutes later the girl again emerged and after a careful scrutiny signalled that the coast was clear. Wade came out at a run and flung himself on a passing tramcar. Leaving his colleague, Worsfold, to shadow the woman, Lee jumped aboard a following tram and managed to keep Wade in sight as far as Limehouse Town Hall, where an inopportune jam in the traffic separated the cars. That was the last seen of Wade that day. In the meantime, Worsfold had traced the woman to a house in the neighbourhood—at Grosvenor Road—where she and Wade were lodging.

When we went to bed that night to snatch a few hours' rest, we were most of us dead tired, for any investigation of this sort imposes a great physical strain on those engaged. All our plans were laid for the morning, but there was still some doubt in our minds as to whether, after all, we should find Donovan—and if he escaped it was likely we should be worse off than before.

At six o'clock in the morning Wade, a tall, athletic, smart young fellow of about twenty-two, was arrested while still in bed at his lodgings in Grosvenor Road. I remember there was a knife on the table, but if he had intended to use it in the eventuality of his arrest, he got no chance. Pale and trembling, he was taken away to the police station, and some of us hurried to the mother's house in Commercial Road, hoping that we might find Donovan there.

The men who had been keeping the place under surveillance reported that there had been no sign of him. To our knocks there was no reply, for the inmates of the

place were sleeping very soundly. We were not disposed to waste time, however, and a determined charge put the door down. Rousing any of the occupants we could find, we put quick questions and made a hurried search. It was soon clear that Donovan was not there.

Every moment was now of importance, and it began to look as if we should be baffled when I got a hint from someone that Donovan would probably be found at a place in Church Row, Limehouse, nearly a mile away. Thither we made our way.

The place proved to be a tiny little house of two floors. After a hasty survey and an equally hasty council of war, we determined to enter it from the back and front at the same time, an empty house next door affording us a passage to the rear.

So we got to Donovan's room, and the first he knew of our presence was by being roused from sleep with the curt order, "We are police officers! Get up and dress!"

Like Wade, Donovan was a fine specimen of a man, although some twelve years older than his half-brother. But he saw the futility of resistance and made no trouble.

Little more was said then, but when they were told at the police station that they would be charged with murder, Wade became righteously indignant.

"You've done a fine —— thing this time," he said. "I'll do my utmost to disprove it. This is a nice —— thing, ain't it?"

They were recognized by Rae as the men he had seen leaving the shop shortly after the murder, and one or two other people identified them as having been in the vicinity. Another little bit of evidence tumbled our way. The man from whom Wade rented his room in Grosvenor Road told us that on the morning of the murder he had followed out instructions given on the previous evening and called Wade at five o'clock. Now, Wade was habitu-

ally a late riser. Why had he got up at that hour on that day?

Still, all things considered, the case against the men was very limp from a legal point of view. Nearly five weeks later it was unexpectedly strengthened, on the day before the trial opened at the Old Bailey, when Detective Sergeant Leeson found another man who had hitherto been too terrified to speak. This was a Sunday-school teacher, son of the caretaker of an adjacent chapel who, at eleven o'clock the night before the murder, had gone to see that the chapel was safely locked up. He had then noticed Wade, whom he knew by sight, talking with another man a few yards from the shop. As day was breaking the following morning, about six o'clock, he passed the same two men quite close to the shop. When taken to Brixton Prison, he without hesitation identified Donovan as the second man. This was another case of the reluctance of witnesses to come forward. His father had been assaulted and robbed a year or two before, and his mother had persuaded him to remain silent.

Even with this evidence there was considerable doubt whether a jury would convict. The trial lasted three days, and the result hung in the balance until the last moment. There was no evidence for the defense, and it is probable that the failure of either of the prisoners to go into the witness box was a thing that told considerably against them.

Between the time that they were found guilty and the day when sentence of death was carried into effect, doubts still lingered in the public mind. We were, in fact, ordered to be on duty till the last minute lest any scrap of information bearing either in their favour or against them should turn up.

Towards midnight on the very eve of execution a man gave himself up at some outlying police station and made a full detailed confession of the crime. For a while it

looked as if the incredible had happened, and I believe it was touch and go whether the condemned men should be respited. Sir Melville Macnaghten, the assistant commissioner, hurried down to Whitechapel in evening dress —he had been to some function—as nearly agitated as I have ever seen such a self-contained man. As soon, however, as we were able to test important points in the self-accused man's story, it became obvious that he was lying. He was just one of those half-wits who, for some queer reason, turn up not infrequently to confess to crimes that have attracted public attention. Finally, he admitted that his whole story was a fabrication based on facts that he had gleaned from the newspaper. He did not know Donovan or Wade, but declared that his motive had been "to do them a good turn."

The execution took place the following morning, and it was reported that on the way to the scaffold Donovan declared that they had not intended to kill Miss Farmer. This was in reality a confession, for, whatever their intention, it was murder none the less. Undoubtedly the men were guilty, but the circumstantial evidence on which they were convicted was slighter than any on which I have ever known a murder brought home.

The case proved a wholesome lesson to some of the wilder elements in the East End. The moral effect of detecting and convicting murderer after murderer was extraordinarily good.

CHAPTER VII

Lee of the C. I. D.

PERHAPS because they see so much of the darker side of human nature, few detectives can resist the relief of a joke. Not infrequently it happens that an affair which, at the outset, appears to promise drama or tragedy resolves itself into farce.

I think the nearest I ever came to being really scared was after the Sidney Street business. I had been one night to a Masonic gathering and was called away by a report that one of the leaders had been located. Slipping a coat over my evening dress and borrowing a cap, I hastily organized a search of the suspected house. Among my staff was an officer named Gooding—an able man who later became an inspector at Bow Street, but who was so energetic that he often found himself in ludicrous difficulties.

We were scattered over the place, and no doubt our nerves were a little tense, for it was possible that shooting would break out at any instant. Suddenly there came a crash—followed almost at once by a louder, thunderous roar. It flashed through my mind that an attempt was being made to blow up the house, and I rushed down from one of the upper rooms. The sound of emphatic words led us to the coal cellar. There, flat on his back, lay Mr. Gooding, trying to extricate himself from hundredweights of coal that he had brought down while carrying on his investigations.

A touch of humour would sometimes illumine the gravest affairs. Once, when going to arrest a man for murder, I took Gooding and other officers with me to

the house where I believed the assassin to be. Following a not uncommon practice, we knocked at the doors of each of the adjoining houses and arranged, on the pretext that suspicious characters had been seen, to send men through them to the back yards to cut off the retreat of our man. Gooding was one of these.

Just as all was ready a terrific uproar broke out at the back. Shouts and screams mingled with the ferocious barking and growling of angry dogs. The whole neighbourhood was aroused. We rushed to ascertain the cause of the outburst. Mr. Gooding was feverishly trying to free himself from the barbed wire in which he had become entangled at the top of a fence while three or four large dogs were leaping up at him.

As we later learned, these animals had been temporarily left at the house to be sold at the market in "Club Row" (Sclater Street) the following Sunday, and no one had mentioned them when Gooding passed through. They had, not unnaturally, resented his intrusion.

It took us several minutes to render first aid, and we might have lost our man but for one thing. When the commotion began he was under the impression that friends of the person he had killed had arrived on a mission of vengeance, and he had not dared to leave the house. As it was, when he realized what had really happened and walked out of the front door, we were waiting for him.

Gooding, however, scored heavily on another occasion, his victim being one of the most notorious practical jokers in the C. I. D. This was Samuel Lee, a high-spirited, quick-witted man from whose propensities for fun few persons were safe. It was Lee, a big man with enormous hands, who, noting a gorgeous stranger in spotless evening dress, a little too interested in the conversation he was carrying on with some friends at a restaurant, called for a glass of water and induced a waitress to pull out

one of her long golden hairs "to demonstrate an interesting scientific experiment." He poured a pool of water onto the marble-topped table and explained that he would make the hair contort itself into various shapes. The stranger drew closer and closer until he was actually leaning over the table. Suddenly Lee brought down his big hand on to the pool of water. There was a tremendous splash, with dire results to the stranger's immaculate shirt and waistcoat. In a furious rage the other demanded an explanation.

"Well," said Lee coldly, "I had a bet with my friends here that I would find the most inquisitive man in the district—and I've won."

It was Lee, too, who induced a young officer who was assisting him in a horse-stealing case to make himself up as a groom. When he beheld the other in breeches that had obviously been built for a much smaller man, he declared that the business was so urgent that there was no time to change. The joke dawned painfully on the other —no equestrian in any case—when he was set to ride a broad-backed horse from Sutton to Whitechapel. In spite of his little peculiarities—which included such things as dropping a life-like imitation beetle into an unsuspecting friend's drink—Lee was a very efficient detective.

The incident in which Gooding was concerned happened in this way. A burglar, having made a big haul in some suburban district, had brought his plunder to his lodgings in the East End. Becoming alarmed at an active interest manifested by his landlady in the parcel deposited in his room, he decided that it would be well to find a safer hiding place. To this end he consulted another crook, who agreed to persuade his sweetheart to allow the property to be transferred to her address. Arrangements having been made, the second man—who happened to be an occasional police informant—went to Lee and gave the whole business away.

Lee fixed an appointment with the informant at a certain place from which it would be easy to intercept the thief, and at the time agreed took up his position. A few minutes later a fierce thunderstorm, accompanied by tropical rain, broke. For some time Lee waited, and at last, concluding that things had been delayed by the storm, decided to take shelter in a near-by public house.

Within five minutes or so the face of Gooding appeared at the door. He greeted Lee with unaffected surprise and lamented that he could only stop a moment as he was engaged in urgent business. Would Lee lend him his umbrella for a little while. Lee, entirely unsuspicous, agreed, but urged his friend not to be long as he might want it himself at any instant.

So Gooding went away. Time went on, but he did not return. In a far from amiable frame of mind Lee determined to abandon his vigil and, umbrella-less, trudged back to the station through the drenching rain. A dark suspicion crossed his mind when he saw his informant hanging outside. Dashing into the station, almost the first person he saw was Gooding, calmly sorting a quantity of valuables.

"Hello, Sam," he said complacently. "Sorry I wasn't able to get back with the umbrella. I've been held up. In fact, I've run across the man who did the so-and-so job. Piece of luck that I happened to run across him."

The disconcerting truth broke upon Lee. For once he was almost at a loss for words. "You—you——!" he ejaculated. "You came and borrowed my umbrella after you'd pinched my informant, got this thief—and now you have the nerve to tell me that you 'happened' to be there. Let me tell you what I think of you." And he did.

It had chanced that the informant, arriving late at the rendezvous and failing to find Lee, had seen Gooding taking shelter in a doorway and hastily told him some of the facts. Gooding had been quite unconscious of Lee's

presence in the public house when he rushed there to borrow an umbrella, but had been unable to resist the temptation to take advantage of the situation. Then he lay in wait for the thief and made the arrest.

Before he died Lee reached the rank of divisional detective inspector. His end showed the resolute courage of the man. He swam a river after an escaping prisoner and caught his man.

"You've swum to this side for your own convenience," he said, "and now you'll swim back for mine."

So he brought the half-drowned man back to the other bank. That episode brought on a cold, and some time later he developed consumption. He went to a sanatorium and, after a while, insisted on knowing the truth about his condition. They told him that he only had a few weeks to live.

On that he left the institution and came back to London. He wanted to avoid discharge from the service as medically unfit. "I am going to die a C. I. D. man," he told me. This decision was partly actuated by sentiment, but mainly because it would make a difference to the amount his wife would be entitled to from the provident fund. By means that I will not describe, he managed to put through a clever bluff on the doctors and was supposed to have made a miraculous recovery. Thus, smiling under sentence of imminent death, he carried on, and no one knew until the end came.

An ability to see the humorous side of his calling is a great asset to a detective. I am tempted here to quote from a letter which I recently received from my old friend and colleague, George Wright, now living in cheerful retirement at Eastbourne.

> Do you remember the stolen load of tea traced to a man on K Division whose place was packed with almost every sort of merchandise stolen from the docks?

He ran a woodyard where we found the tea. This yard covered a large area piled high with wood through which narrow avenues allowing room for no more than two men to pass abreast ran at all angles.

We passed through some of the houses at the back of the yard to gain access and were informed by all those we saw that a very large and fierce dog was let loose every evening and had the run of the place all night. It was reported that he was big enough and ferocious enough to tear an intruder to pieces.

Being one of the officers you had deputed to lead the search, I must confess that I had a nasty cold feeling up my back, and I noticed that the other officers looked grave. We dropped over a wall with torches and sticks, and being an old sailor with a knowledge of cutlass drill I went just—only just—in front to commence the long search. For over an hour we wandered, looking—to tell the truth—more for the dog than for the stolen tea. We were encouraged by one man who remembered having been told that the dog was so crafty that it would make no sign till it flew at a man. We kept our lights directed well in front, and I was sweating in spite of the cold.

At last we discerned a number of chests hidden among a pile of boxes. For the moment we forgot the dog. Suddenly something touched my leg, and a second later a cold muzzle came in contact with my hand. It was the dog wagging his tail and asking to be petted! While we had kept our lights well to our front he had followed us round, thoroughly enjoying himself and anxious to be friends.

Another case was when we lay in wait for two desperate armed Russian criminals. We had learned that they intended to break into the back of a place in Brick Lane, where a cloth merchant had a large safe, at about one o'clock in the morning. They proposed to

enter by using a long ladder and then crawling along a ledge and passing over some roofs. I was in charge of the officers who were to wait for them, but we did not tell you all that happened because we thought you might not have approved.

At about eleven o'clock, with Harry Dessent I took up a position in a tiny cupboard-like apartment into which the two of us could barely squeeze, and from which we could keep a lookout through a dingy little window. Other officers were concealed on a landing ready to rush out when we gave a signal. The little place was very uncomfortable, especially for a long stay. One had to sit down while the other, in a stooping position, peered out of the window.

Now, Harry Dessent was absolutely scared of rats. Two hours went by with no sign of the burglars. We were both cramped, and the job was getting monotonous. I was sitting down when I found a small piece of stick and I gently twiddled it across Harry's foot. He jumped and whispered in a horror-struck voice that he felt a rat run over him.

"Very likely," I replied, also in a whisper. "They have been running over and round me for a long while."

"Good heavens!" he gasped. "I can't stop in here."

"Keep quiet," I remonstrated. "The burglars may be here at any moment now. We mustn't make a noise."

I noticed he was all nerves, but after a few minutes he seemed to pull himself together. I felt that he needed waking up again. I suddenly, very lightly, ran my fingers outside his trouser leg from the ankle to the knee. Harry gave a yell and let out a kick that sent the door open with a bang. The officers on the landing rushed out, and there was a terrible row for a time. Of course, I had to explain, but the only man who did not

see the joke was Dessent, and you should have seen the look he gave me when I blamed him for spoiling the show.

We did not really expect much would happen after that, but at about half-past two we saw in the moonlight what appeared to be three or four white pigeons bobbing up and down on a wall some thirty or forty yards away. They came nearer and nearer, and the effect was really weird. Then we realized that they were men's hands. Two burly forms came over, and so we captured two safe breakers completely equipped for a big job.

A great-hearted, jovial soul is George Wright, and a scrap of the philosophy that keeps him young is worth repeating. "Do as I do, enjoy every minute. I say 'Good-morning, George,' and reply, 'Good-morning, sir.' Then I give myself instructions for the day."

Although I knew nothing of the incident at the time, I can feel some sympathy with Dessent, for I have no liking for rats, myself. On one occasion we got to learn of a warehouse-breaking plot and, contrary to the usual practice in these cases, had to keep observation from inside a building. There happened to be so many places where robbers could break in that it was impossible to watch effectively from outside. So we sat in a basement through which some stream had once run. Great water rats scampered to and fro, and as we dared make no noise, we could do nothing but watch them in the semi-darkness. I never felt so uncomfortable or came so near to being scared. I only managed to shake off the feeling of creepiness when I heard stealthy footsteps on the stairs and knew that the marauders—whom we caught red-handed—had come.

A year or two after the war there came to me what I thought was reliable information of a plan in which

a group of notorious safebreakers were concerned, to bring off a coup in one of the central districts of London. I determined to handle the business myself and made arrangements to catch them in the act. I remember that the then assistant commissioner, to whom I confided my intentions, thought that I was embarking on a highly dangerous expedition.

"Be very careful," he advised me. "See that you're armed."

I pointed out that there is seldom any risk to life when a number of police officers are acting together in making an arrest, and I did not intend to go alone.

With several detectives I went to the scene of operations, and we cautiously closed in on the suspects who, sure enough, were hard at work and perspiring profusely. As we finally rushed in and seized them I fancied I saw consternation written on their faces as they recognized me.

I was wrong—it was amusement. After the first confusion caused by our unexpected entrance had passed away we learned the truth. The safe was an old one which had stood unopened in a lawyer's office for many years—since the departure of its original owner to Buenos Aires with the keys. The room it occupied was wanted, and it had been sold to a gentleman of a speculative turn of mind, who had quite legitimately employed our suspects to open it. Wonderful rumours as to the fabulous value of its contents had spread about the underworld—ever the most credulous of mortals. There was, however, nothing in it but a few old and unimportant papers.

One of the men who was mixed up in this was one of the most ready-witted criminals I have ever known. His alertness of mind served him well while he was acting as "outside man" at a burglary. Just at the moment when he was expecting his confederates to come out with their

booty a big policeman made an unwelcome appearance. The watcher was not in the least disconcerted.

"Oh, I say, officer," he exclaimed, with a slightly embarrassed air, "I've been looking for you. I've been robbed. The fact is I've made a bit of a fool of myself—you understand—there was a woman—I had a drink or two and went home with her. I think I can show you the house."

So the policeman, all unsuspecting, was led on a wild-goose chase. Five or ten minutes later the other admitted that he was confused—that he could not, after all, recognize the house in which he had been robbed. So, thanking the officer, he went his way—having ensured that the coast was completely clear for the actual burglars to make their escape.

CHAPTER VIII

Here Are Detectives

THERE is no more interesting profession in the world—to the right man—than that of the police detective. That doesn't imply at all what the readers of detective fiction may assume. There have been all kinds of successful detectives, but they haven't got anywhere near the top by making flashing deductions from the scratches on a watch and enmeshing a criminal by the exercise of pure reason. It is quite simple to fasten on some trivial but dramatic feature in a case and to present the facts on paper to show that upon it turned the solution of a baffling mystery—but it is not always true. Not one fact but many go to prove the guilt of a criminal. The order in which those facts are collected is of small importance compared to adding them together so that a conclusion may be formed. It is in getting *all* the facts that a detective proves himself.

Therefore, one of the first qualities of an ambitious detective must be industry. To that he must add patience, courage, tact and resourcefulness. Few professions are more exacting or require greater self-imposed discipline. Few present greater temptations, for, of necessity, a great deal of trust must be reposed in every detective, whatever his rank. Looking back over a lifetime in the C. I. D. I realize with astonishment how seldom that trust has been abused—not only in great things but in small. I wish to know of no body of men as a whole with a keener sense of the honour of their profession than the members of the C. I. D.

When I left Scotland Yard there were nearly a thousand detectives under me—all picked men. There could be no greater mistake than to imagine that these men were all of one type, either then or at any other time during my service. All, of course, had certain qualities in common, but there were great differences in temperament and habit. A detective, after all, is a human being.

The men who are good at every phase of detective work are rare—at least as rare as competent all-round men are in other professions. Most detectives take their place somewhere between two broad lines.

At one end are officers who are extremely clever in obtaining swift and reliable information of happenings in what the novelists call the underworld. They work hard and conscientiously and include some of the best officers in the service. They keep avenues of information constantly open. One of the most difficult branches of criminal investigation is to trail a professional crook, for inquiries usually have to be made among people—friends or associates of bad character—who for one reason or another may be interested in misleading a detective. It is in such cases that these officers shine. But among them are men seldom seen in the witness box. They know they make bad witnesses. It is really torture for them to give evidence, and many would sooner face a shooting criminal than a barrister in wig and gown.

At the other extreme are detectives who, odd as it may seem, are reluctant to associate themselves too closely with professional criminals and their friends. They prefer—when they have an opportunity of choice—what I may call the better-class, the showier side of detective work. This is dealing with the investigation of offenses committed by non-professional criminals—frauds and similar things. In the ordinary run of events the path of the investigator is easier and much more pleasant in these cases. The only person who wishes to trip him up

is the actual criminal. Everyone else is willing and anxious to help to arrive at the truth. They are decent and respectable people, and it is comparatively simple to interview them, take statements and gather documentary evidence.

Between these two classes are all manner of officers who tend one way or the other. I am not one of those who believe that every detective officer has every virtue. It is human nature to seek the most congenial work, and it must not be supposed that all the clever and hard-working men belong to one class. There are men who never, on their own initiative, caught a thief in their lives and yet, under discreet guidance, have rendered fine service. A can be relied on, cold, wet, and hungry, to keep observation for days and nights in order to report when a particular person enters a certain place, and his vigilance will never relax; but he may be hopeless in picking up the threads of an inquiry by personal interviews. B, who would break down if set on a tedious vigil of this sort, has a faculty for persuading all sorts of unlikely people to confide in him and will spend tireless hours in verifying facts. C can handle and dissect an intricate series of documents with skill but would hate to seek for a common informant in a public house.

The deliberately careless or the deliberately lazy detective is not common among the members of the C. I. D. I shall not deny that there are a few, as there always must be in any organization numbering hundreds of men. It is not always simple to weed them out, for they shelter behind the activities of better men, and are not always above taking credit for work that has really been performed by others.

Mistakes, when they do occur, are mostly to be attributed to some small oversight, and they usually recoil heavily on those responsible. I remember two men who were entrusted with a warrant to arrest a rogue, person-

ally unknown to them, living in a remote part of the East End. It is not an unusual practice in these cases to make the arrest late at night or in the early hours of the morning, when there is a greater probability of finding the quarry at home. Sometime after midnight, the two officers arrived in the district, which was unfamiliar to them, and sought for a certain thoroughfare, which I will call Avenue Road. They came across it at last, and scanning the numbers of the houses, knocked at the door of the one they wanted.

For some little while there was no reply, and then a sleepy and irritable man thrust up a bedroom window.

"Who are you? What do you want?" he demanded.

"Come down. We want to see you," was the reply.

The man peered at them. It was a rough neighbourhood. In the dim light he saw two fellows wearing caps and with their overcoat collars turned up. Quite evidently he did not like the look of them.

"You go away," he said. "I'm not coming down."

"Don't be a fool. You know who we are," one of them retorted. "If you don't come down we'll put the door down and come and fetch you."

The window slammed. One of the detectives raised the knocker and slammed it in a final reverberating summons. The door suddenly opened, and the occupant of the house stood before them—a heavy poker in his hand.

There was a rough-and-tumble in which some damage was done on both sides. But at last he was overpowered and taken away under arrest.

A little too late came explanations. The prisoner was a perfectly innocent man. The officers had got the number of the house quite correctly but had gone to Avenue Street instead of Avenue Road. The occupant had believed them to be daring toughs bent on some form of robbery.

The matter did not end there. The officers were prose-

cuted for assault and were sentenced to a term of imprisonment. They appealed and were bound over. Strenuous and successful efforts were made by their superintendent to prevent their dismissal from the service —for they were good men—and they did much fine work afterwards. The narrow margin by which they had been saved from ruin taught them a lesson in discretion.

All this might have been avoided by one simple precaution. Personally, I always made it a practice, whenever I went to make an arrest in conditions of this kind, to ensure that a uniformed officer was in the vicinity. Usually I would give a hint to the man on the beat that I was a C. I. D. officer about to make a call, and that I should like him to be at hand in case of trouble. In an emergency there is not always time to display a warrant card, nor is it necessarily convincing to those who have not seen such a thing before. But a glimpse of a blue uniform puts all question of authority beyond doubt.

There are many occasions when the only course open to a detective is to make an arrest at the place where a suspect is living. This, I have always felt, should only be done when it is unavoidable. Otherwise it is a mean and contemptible action, adding unnecessarily to the humiliation and suffering of quite innocent people.

It was once said that every Scotland Yard officer lives over a volcano. They are, quite properly, expected to carry on their work under a very rigid code, and any error of judgment may cost them their livelihood and even their reputation. Yet, by the very nature of the business, a zealous officer must run risks. An active man is always in trouble. Like others, I have been in embarrassing situations that might have developed very awkwardly for me.

Once a colleague and I—it was Richardson, who was with me when Seaman was arrested—were on our way to the Southwestern Police Court when we noticed a

woman, well known to us as a shoplifter, hanging about among the people who were boarding buses outside London Bridge Station. She was with a well dressed man, and after watching them for a little we decided to arrest them for attempting to pick pockets. She saw me as I advanced towards her and, letting out a scream, took to her heels. There were, as usual, many sympathizers with them when we put them under arrest.

"You've done a fine thing for yourself this time," the woman declared. "I'm living under the protection of this gentleman—the Count de ——"

The lofty attitude of the man, who in very broken English made indignant and dignified protest, almost convinced me that he was really somebody of account. At the police station the inspector who took the charge was also impressed and, I think, inclined to believe that we had made a bad mistake.

With no very easy minds Richardson and I rushed away to the Southwestern Court, where we had to give evidence in another case, and rushed back.

"If," said my colleague, "this fellow is who he says he is, they'll believe him and not us."

The pair were charged, and it looked ominous when the magistrate remanded them on light bail instead of the substantial bail that I asked for. It seemed as if he also had doubts.

We became a fraction more comfortable when the man did not take advantage of his bail. The inference we drew was that he was afraid to ask any acquaintance to act as surety lest we should seize the opportunity to make inquiries. His photograph and record were ultimately found at Scotland Yard, after a prolonged search, and he grinned at me while his English grew amazingly more proficient when I went to his cell to compare him with the portrait. He was just an ordinary small crook, with one or two trifling convictions against him.

Both he and the woman were sentenced, but they had given us a fright. The case was not unlike one to which I have already referred. Had this man really been a person of consequence it is possible that we might have been accused of trumping up the charge against him.

There can be no hard-and-fast rule to guide a detective in every case. So much depends upon the person concerned. Precisely similar sets of facts may arise against two people. Against one it is scarcely possible to hint a suspicion, the other may be actually charged. Imagine a sum of money to be missing from a room to which only one person was known to have had access. There would be considerable difference in the action that would probably be adopted if the person were a woman of some social distinction or if she were a charwoman. The balance of probabilities would have to be considered.

Common sense is not always a safeguard to a detective. In a certain case elaborate precautions were taken to spare a person undesirable publicity and to make the taking of a statement as little irksome as possible. The officer concerned woke up next day to find himself the centre of an earthquake—and to put it mildly, was assailed from all quarters. He had just gone out of his way to behave decently.

This kind of thing has a reaction upon certain temperaments. There are dozens of officers with the Nelson touch who will risk everything in carrying out their duty. There are others—perhaps even in the higher ranks—who are willing enough to assume the credit if things go well, but who have not the moral courage to stand by a colleague when trouble arises.

It is not good for the service when an officer is afraid to use initiative or accept responsibility. I believe that I was considered a disciplinarian and, indeed, I never feared plain speaking. There are slips that must be dealt with by a heavy hand. But official nagging never appealed

to me. I have seen the hearts of too many promising men broken by petty routine. It is one thing to deal with a man direct—to tell him straight that he has been a fool; it is another to put on paper some portentous reprimand that will hang to his official record for twenty or thirty years.

So long as a spirit of fairness and justice is preserved, it pays to keep men interested and enthusiastic in their work. No good detective can be an automaton, a creature determined to do no more than keep to set times. Only enthusiasm for his job can keep him going, as it sometimes does, for twenty-four hours at a stretch with scanty chances to snatch a bite of food. I myself once went for four days and nights without taking my clothes off. In these matters it is better to lead than to drive. On one occasion, Arthur Neil and myself, having done our full day's work as superintendents of the C. I. D., went out to keep observation for a whole night, under anything but pleasant conditions, to demonstrate by example that we—then men over fifty—had lost neither our interest nor our stamina.

Great changes have come over some aspects of criminal investigation in the last thirty or forty years. Detectives now collaborate much more freely and act together as a team rather than as individuals. In the old days a man who had become possessed of information in regard to a crime or a criminal was inclined to keep it to himself. That tendency has gradually disappeared. Every officer likely to be of help is now notified or consulted. There are many advantages in the new system, but there are also some drawbacks, for it may sometimes happen that two or three energetic officers are pulling a team of drones. Yet the necessity of individual enterprise remains as important as ever.

For the sake of those ambitious officers who may read this book I may here interpolate a word of warning.

There are men—they are very few—with a streak of vanity that impels them to adopt a pose at the expense of those who have really done the work. They like to bask in the limelight. This is not only mean, it is stupid; for the facts must be ultimately known in the service. As chief constable I was always on my guard against this sort of thing and made it my business to see that credit went in the right direction. Unless kept in check it breeds resentment and checks energy.

I have a vivid recollection of a case in which I was concerned in my early days. There had been a robbery in one of the remote suburbs, and a policeman had been wounded by a revolver shot in attempting to arrest the thief. I tracked the man, who lived in my district, and arrested him with some of the stolen property still in his possession. He was taken to the division in which the crime had happened and made a confession. The only thing the local detective inspector had to do with the case was formally to prefer the charge.

Yet he was the man who went into the witness box to give evidence. All that I was permitted to say was that I had arrested the man—the inference being that I had merely carried out his instructions. I was an obscure subordinate detective, and the inspector was a man of great ability with a well deserved reputation that he added to in later years. But he could not resist taking the little bit of kudos from me.

Patience is a virtue in a detective, up to a point. But it must not be confused with hesitation. I have known many criminals escape through lack of swift and direct action. Armstrong might never have been convicted of poisoning his wife had he been allowed a chance, when suspicion focused upon him, to get rid of certain damning evidence. When Mr. Thompson was stabbed by his wife's lover, Hector Bywaters, at Ilford, I doubt if the crime would ever have been brought home to either the woman

or Bywaters if I had not acted on a vague hint that the woman had a lover, and thrown scores of men to search for him before he got away to sea. Had he eluded us then, he would probably have destroyed the letters she had written to him, and there would have been practically no evidence.

Any dilatory methods may lead not only to the destruction but to the manufacture of evidence. There is, for instance, always the possibility that a prisoner may put forth an alibi at the last minute. It may be false or, at the best, extremely doubtful. Alibis are very easy to concoct, especially what I may call the family or friendly alibi. A true set of facts is sworn to, but the times at which they occurred have been manipulated to fit in with the prisoner's story. Unless precautions have been taken in the early stages of the case, it is almost impossible to break down such a defense. Practically the only way to meet it is to have all persons who might be interested in a plot of the kind interviewed as soon as possible after an arrest, before they have had time to come to any concerted arrangement.

CHAPTER IX

Criminal Investigation—Theory and Practice

THE theoretical side of criminal investigation can be taught, and is taught very thoroughly at Scotland Yard. But no man can become an efficient detective without practical experience, a touch of imagination, and a faculty of thoroughness—above all, thoroughness. One single fact overlooked may change the whole complexion of a case. As an instance in point, I will tell a story that may present an idea to some writer of detective fiction.

A wounded man had been brought to one of the stations in my district. Blood had soaked through his tail coat and his overcoat, and when they were hastily pulled off together, it was seen that he had been badly stabbed in the small of the back. The divisional surgeon pointed out that the injury could not have been self-inflicted—although we scarcely needed a doctor to tell us that—and that it was not very likely that the man would live. It looked as if we should have a case of murder on our hands.

The man was immediately rushed to the nearest hospital, and as soon as he was in a condition to be questioned, we got his story. This substantiated many details we had by this time already learned. In effect it was this:

He was a butcher, and for a large part of the day had been drinking with an acquaintance. After a time a quarrel had arisen, and the other had struck at him. He fell to the ground and when bystanders rushed to his assistance, it was found that he was bleeding. Then he was

brought to the police station, and the assailant made off.

We searched high and low for the fugitive, but for a time he eluded us. Meanwhile, contrary to all expectations, the injured man recovered. On the very morning that he was to leave the hospital the man we sought gave himself up.

It remained only to present the case against him. I sent for the bloodstained clothes, which would probably be used as evidence. As I glanced at the overcoat the first thing that struck me was that there was no cut through the cloth. How, then, had the man been stabbed? The mystery dissolved when I picked up the tail coat—a kind of morning coat. There, wrapped in a butcher's apron which had been stuffed into the tail pocket, was a big butcher's knife. Cuts corresponding to the position of the wound were in the waistcoat, shirt, and singlet.

What had happened was this: In the course of their drunken quarrel he had staggered and fallen on his back, either as the result of a push or a slip. The wound had resulted. His companion, who was in no state to think very clearly, had concluded that he had in some way been responsible and promptly absconded. The circumstances had looked so clear at the police station, that there had only been a cursory search of the injured man's clothes to find his name and address. Until that knife was discovered, everyone—police, witnesses, the injured man, and even the suspected assailant, who quite likely would have pleaded guilty—had put the obvious construction on the facts. We should have had to make some embarrassing explanations if we had preferred a charge before the discovery was made.

It is a commonplace that every detective should, as far as possible, keep himself in fit physical condition. He never knows what demands may be made upon his powers of endurance. Perhaps there is no more severe test of stamina than what is called officially "keeping

observation." This, whether it is simply watching a house or shadowing a suspect, involves a physical strain combined with a mental tension for hours or even days at a stretch.

There was a gang, suspected of receiving tobacco stolen from various warehouses and shops, whom we were exceedingly anxious to trap. We at last located their retreat in a narrow street so situated that any attempt at surveillance in the ordinary way must at once have been detected. Glancing about the neighbourhood I came to the conclusion that the only point at which an observer could secrete himself to wait upon events was a railway viaduct that overlooked the road and the house. I made my way along the line, and for several days I crouched against the parapet wall waiting and watching. I had to be alert, not only for everything that was taking place down below, but for the approach of every train. By squeezing myself hard against the wall I found that a train would miss me with an inch or two to spare. Had a door become unfastened, nothing could have saved me. I think it was the most perilous proposition of that sort that I ever undertook, and I was heartily relieved when I got the evidence I wanted and was enabled to clean up the gang and end my vigil.

There is a popular belief that a detective has some miraculous power of shadowing a suspect without betraying himself. In fact, shadowing—"tailing" is the slang term—calls for a close attention to detail and for quick thinking. The most difficult person for a detective to follow unobserved is a man of whom he knows nothing and who may be on his guard. Only with considerable luck could he be kept in view in a city street for more than ten minutes or a quarter of an hour. I have known detectives of experience, through thoughtlessness, or even sheer stupidity, expect the most impossible things. One poor young officer was sent to keep observation on a man he

had never seen in the flesh, at a crowded station during the rush hours. The proverbial search for a needle in a haystack would have been simpler.

It is much easier when the habits of a suspect have been diagnosed. Very seldom is shadowing just a matter of keeping on a man's trail from behind without being seen. Sooner or later he becomes aware that someone is at his heels. An astute officer will, to a certain extent, to able to anticipate the movements of his quarry. Most people form habits of which they are quite unconscious. They will always walk, for instance, on the inside or the outside of the pavement. They will always cross the road at the same spot. So it is frequently possible to know what a man will do before he does it and to be, not behind, but in front of him. The tendency also often enables a detective to pick up a man he has lost sight of.

We had considerable trouble on one occasion with a notorious receiver whom I will call Brown, although that was not his name. Although we knew that he was doing an extensive business, it was impossible to bring anything home to him until we had discovered the location of what he would have called his "lumber shed"—the depot in which stolen goods were held until he could dispose of them.

He was as wary as a weasel. If he suspected that he was being followed he would practise all sorts of tricks. Walking fast for a short distance, he would come to a sudden halt. He would take a turning and suddenly double back. Sometimes we would have two or three men after him, but almost invariably they were outwitted.

After this had gone on for a considerable time we compared notes and, from a number of ruses he had practised, were able to disentangle what may be called his constant habits. Then we were able, in a sense, to turn his own weapons against him. He was never followed. Men awaited him at various points and noted the direc-

tion he took. Thus we eventually located his hiding place and were able to make an extremely fine haul.

I am amused—although it is not always an amusing matter—when I hear the taunt "Third Degree" levelled against Scotland Yard. I know of nothing more likely to defeat its own ends than any form of bullying. Of course, there are officers who are apt to become impatient and irritable when they are called upon to listen to an interminable string of obvious and contradictory lies—I have known judges show petulance in similar circumstances—but these men seldom get satisfactory results. Often they have come to me baffled, and I have managed to get at the truth by directly opposite methods.

When a person under suspicion of a grave crime is detained or arrested he is, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, thrown off his equilibrium. It does not matter whether he is innocent or guilty—he is not normal. However anxious or willing he may be to make a statement, his mind is too disturbed to permit him to give a clear explanation.

This applies also to witnesses who may have had some intimate association with the crime or the criminal, who suddenly realize that they may have placed themselves in a position open to misconstruction or are shocked to find that someone near and dear to them is under suspicion.

In dealing with these people patience is needed to get them back to balanced common sense. For myself, time meant nothing to me in these matters. Hour after hour I would spend if there was the faintest chance of gaining more light on a case. Nor did I—I say it with all sincerity—ever try deliberately to trap a man. Perhaps I was the more successful on that account. I made it a point to avoid all show of officialdom, and to act as decently as I could, and I never lost a chance to show any small courtesy.

On these occasions many things that were not strictly

evidence might be mentioned. I never discouraged these discursions. One never knew to what they might lead. At any rate, they sometimes served to bridge the gaps in what otherwise might have been a disconnected story.

Until I felt that I had a full grasp of what a person wanted to say I never had anything written down. This would save much obscurity and irrelevant detail from clogging a statement. If, for any reason, I felt that a witness was drawing on his imagination, I would point out to him the stupidity of telling lies that would be put on record and, although it was entirely immaterial to me what he said, he might wish to think before he had committed himself.

As I have hinted, this attitude of candour and fairness was really more effective than any subtle attempt to entrap a person, or anything in the nature of browbeating. It convinced people that they would be fairly treated, and they lost a kind of antagonism. Indeed, one would sometimes find an indirect admission of importance being made in the form of a request for advice—which I always gave as far as I might be lawfully justified. "Tell me, Mr. Wensley," said one man accused of murder, after stubbornly protesting his innocence. "If a man hit a woman with a hammer, not intending to kill her, and she died, would that be murder?"

In another case of murder I was interviewing a suspect in a police station, and he was telling a very involved story. It was towards midnight, and suddenly a terrific thunderstorm broke. As we talked between the crashes of thunder and the glare of the lightning, I saw perspiration dripping from his forehead, while his eyes would wander from me to the window. I turned to see what was attracting his attention. The next flash revealed to me a big cinema poster on which, in glaring letters, stood out the words: TRUTH WILL OUT. A very short time after, at another station, I interviewed a man regard-

ing the death of a woman who had been horribly mutilated. Almost mechanically I glanced out of the window. There facing me was another poster referring to a "turn" at some house of entertainment. The only words that could be clearly seen were: A WOMAN CUT IN TWO. Both these men were convicted.

I have been often asked whether I made a point of carrying arms when likely to run across dangerous or violent criminals. In fact, I never worried about it, and even at the siege of Sidney Street I was unarmed. On occasions, when I have known colleagues of mine to be carrying pistols, I have, I honestly believe, been more scared of them than of any criminal. From a police point of view I think it is a mistake to carry any lethal weapon. It needs a very nice judgment to hit upon the exact moment when one would be justified in using a gun. In this country an officer would only be entitled to shoot when his life was in imminent danger. To pull the trigger a moment too early, or because of some misunderstanding, would almost certainly bring about a charge of manslaughter.

No man has been more threatened than I have. There were plenty of people who wished me ill and were capable of going to any extreme. If I had taken any serious notice of what they said I should never have slept. I took the precaution of keeping myself always in condition, and, perhaps as a result, I never cared a bit for the next man. I found that the best method of impressing the people who were loudest in announcing their intentions to kill me in various unpleasant ways was to show myself among them. They seldom lifted a finger. And although I have been knocked about times without number, I have never been the subject of a revengeful attack by any of the many hundreds of men I have sent to prison.

CHAPTER X

"The Last Drop"

A DETECTIVE is the servant of the law. His responsibility ends when he has brought a suspect before a court and stated fairly such facts as he knows. What happens to the prisoner thereafter is not his official concern. He may agree or disagree with the penalty that the law considers it well to impose. But he has no right to let his personal views influence his duty.

Nevertheless, a detective has opportunities to form an opinion of our penal system because he sees more sides of it than anyone else. A judge sees a criminal only in court; a prison official sees him only in prison. Neither of them sees him as he really is. The individual in the dock and the individual at liberty are different persons. In the atmosphere of the court the prisoner is pretty well always under abnormal stress, and generally he is on his best behaviour, trying to create a favourable impression. Outside, he dresses, acts, and speaks in quite a different fashion. The detective knows many collateral facts about him that he is not permitted to give in evidence—his mentality, his domestic circumstances, his motives in taking to crime, his difficulties, his reaction to punishment. Frequently the detective is the only person with a clear and undistorted knowledge of the prisoner in the dock.

I have never been a believer—some people may think this strange—in capital punishment for all kinds of murder. Many murderers have passed through my hands. Some of them have thoroughly deserved to hang, but others have been really victims of circumstance—men or

women who have killed under some sudden or overmastering passion. The great majority of murders are crimes of impulse. The people who commit them do not stop to think of the consequences. If capital punishment were abolished to-morrow I do not believe crimes of this sort would either increase or decrease.

It is quite a different matter when one considers the case of a professional criminal resorting to murder. I have known numbers of crooks who had no regard for any human life except their own. They have been deterred from murder only by the certainty that they would be hung if they were caught. It is easy to realize what would be the attitude of these people if there were no such thing as capital punishment. Murder would increase considerably—and the victims would be mainly police officers. If a professional criminal could use any homicidal means to prevent detection and arrest there would be murder after murder of that type. Take, for instance, a dangerous criminal who has suffered a long term of penal servitude. Whatever may be said about pampering in prison, there are few people who like it. Such a man is trapped—perhaps by a single detective. If he can kill that officer he will at least have a chance of escape. The worst that can happen to him is that his term of imprisonment will be increased. To him it is a gamble—extra imprisonment against no imprisonment at all. In nine cases out of ten he will therefore take the risk. With the fear of death as against imprisonment the odds become too heavy, although it must be said that there are some who, even with execution staring them in the face, will not hesitate to kill. They take a sporting chance of acquittal.

The time will, perhaps, come when capital punishment will cease to exist, but if it does some method will have to be found of dealing with criminals other than giving them long terms of penal servitude. Once a criminal has tasted prison he dreads going back—but, all the same,

he continues to commit crimes. With that fear before him and no risk of the supreme penalty, he will be tempted to shoot. No criminal murders or attempts to murder a police officer simply because he is a police officer. It is to evade arrest for a criminal offense that he has committed or is in the act of committing, through dread of the probable consequences.

As things are, my experience teaches me that we must hang some murderers. Unless capital punishment had existed I am not sure that during my time in the H Division we should have been able to clean up Whitechapel as we did and put an end to cases of murder and robbery that were much more common than is generally known.

It was not in those days a very extraordinary thing for a dead body to be found in the street during the night or in the early morning hours, and it was significant that this usually occurred not far from houses to which all sorts of bad characters were known to resort. Few of these cases were classed officially as murder. Injuries might, in some instances, have been self-inflicted or have been brought about by some drunken accident. No one could say that it was not so, but that there had been foul play was often likely. Men might be lured to some den—perhaps by a woman—and, unless they tamely submitted to be rooked or robbed, were liable to be badly knocked about by bullies and toughs. If a man was killed while showing fight in one of these affairs, it was simple to carry the body out and drop it in a street some distance away. Even when murder was suspected, who was to say in which of a dozen houses of ill repute it had taken place, or who of scores of roughs was responsible?

On March 15, 1909, the steamer *Dorset* berthed in the Victoria Docks, after the long voyage from Australia. That same night two of her officers, McEachern the second mate, and William Sproull the second engineer, each with about five pounds in his pocket, went

ashore for a spree. Sailors home from a long voyage were the natural prey of all sorts of rogues and hangers-on in the East End. They seldom refused any appeal to their good-nature and liked to boast that they had rewarded some sponger with "a piece of silver." Their generosity, however, was tinged with a touch of caution, and their habit was to provide themselves with a supply of threepenny pieces so that they should not suffer the indignity of proffering alms in anything less than silver. Both Sproull and McEachern carried with them a number of these tiny coins.

Some hours later—at about two-thirty in the morning—I was roused from sleep by a messenger who told me that a man had been found stabbed to death, lying on the roadway in Rupert Street, a thoroughfare just behind Leman Street in which was situated the police station that was my headquarters. As I flung on my clothes and hurried out I learned some more details of the crime.

The dead man was Sproull. A night watchman who happened to be passing through Rupert Street had stumbled across his body, and even while he was bending over it an alert constable named Mackintosh arrived with McEachern. McEachern could help them little. He had been found by the officer, dazed and a little incoherent, leaning against a wall in the Whitechapel Road. How he had got there he did not know. He told a hurried and disconnected story of a somewhat hectic evening. Sproull and he dined at some place in Aldgate and had followed this by a tour of the public houses in the neighbourhood. They were in a very exhilarated condition when they fell in with two girls whose invitation to accompany them home they accepted. A jolly evening was being wound up when suddenly the door burst open and the two officers were fiercely attacked by two men. He knew there had been a fight, but beyond that his mind was a blank. How

he got away, where the house was in which they had been attacked, he could not say.

Now, the constable remembered having seen two rough-looking men peering between the cracks of some window shutters at a place in Rupert Street an hour or so earlier. They had tapped on the shutters, a door had quietly opened, and they had been admitted. The incident had slipped his mind till he met McEachern. Then he had taken the other back to Rupert Street, just after the night watchman had discovered the body.

It was a bright, frosty moonlight night. Gleaming on the roadway were crimson patches, and between these splodges of blood the moon shone on tiny patches of silver. They were threepenny pieces that had dropped from the dead man's pockets. The trail of silver and crimson led to the doorway of a house that was let out in lodgings—No. 3 Rupert Street. On one of the panels was the bloodstained impression of a man's right hand.

Help was summoned, and a young scallywag named Marks Reubens who was found in the house was taken to the police station and detained. By this time I, with some of my staff, had arrived. I looked at the body—it had been left there till I came—and it told its own story. There were injuries other than the stab that had caused death that showed how desperate a fight Sproull had put up. Both trousers pockets had been turned out. Still clinging to the folds of one was a threepenny piece. The other was stained as though a bloody hand had been thrust into it—clear proof that the robbery had taken place after the man had been wounded.

I made my way into the house and, after a few words with the caretaker, entered a room on the ground floor—the room in which the murder had taken place and which, the superstitious may be interested to know, bore the sinister number Thirteen. A pretty girl, not more than

eighteen, was lying on the bed in a drunken sleep. We roused her and she sat up. I touched her shoulder. She made a half-hearted attempt to lie when I asked her what she was doing in the house, but a moment later admitted that it was not her home. "I came here with a man last night," she said and, sulkily defiant, snapped, "Anywhere —find out," when I asked her where she lived. I pressed her no more. There was more urgent business demanding attention.

Leaving her under guard, I went to the first floor, where a married couple (who had nothing to do with the crime) had rooms. I knocked peremptorily at the door. It was immediately flung open, as though someone had been waiting for the summons and a pale-faced young Jew confronted me, visibly agitated. I recognized him as Morris Reubens, a brother of the man we had already detained, and my hand gripped his wrist.

"Reubens, I want you."

He gave a kind of gulp but accepted the arrest meekly. "All right, guv'nor," he said. "I was going to give myself up. I don't want to cause these people any trouble. The two girls brought home a couple of fellows last night, and they wouldn't part up. Me and my brother had a row with them. They threw a glass at one of the girls, so we set about them, and I ran up here with my missis. I don't mind telling you I robbed the fellow who was lying on the ground over there. I hope he's not dead. There was only me and my brother there."

I sent him and the girl back to the station under arrest, while I searched for the other woman—or girl, rather, for none of these people was over twenty-three. She was frightened but self-possessed and added a little more to the story.

"Do you live here?" I asked.

"No," she answered. "I live downstairs. Me and my friend brought two men home, and my husband and his

brother had a row with them. I was frightened and came up here. My husband came up afterwards."

It was a curious little touch that this young prostitute should be so anxious to make it appear that she was married to Morris Reubens, which, of course, she was not.

I packed her, also, off to the police station. The rough outlines of the case were already becoming apparent. Marks Reubens, on the way to the station, had tried unsuccessfully to get rid of a bloodstained handkerchief.

The hands of Morris were suspiciously clean, as if they had recently been washed, and the watch and chain of the dead man were found on him, in odd circumstances, by one of my officers named Rutter. They had been suspended to a hook that had been sewn inside the leg of the trousers worn by Morris. There were, if my recollection is right, a series of these hooks on which small articles of jewelry might be conveniently hung and escape detection unless a very thorough search was made —particularly with loose-fitting trousers.

Nevertheless, at that moment, although I was convinced that deliberate murder had taken place, the evidence was not conclusive. I had to show that the attack was planned and unprovoked. These four people might well tell some concerted story in court that would enable them to escape unless we could disprove it. There was also the possibility of one of the brothers putting the blame on the other in an attempt to exculpate himself. This, in fact, did happen, for at the station Morris exclaimed:

"I did not stab him. If he was stabbed, my brother must have stabbed him."

This was a significant remark that told heavily against him at the trial. Up to that time nothing had been said about the stabbing. It showed that at least Morris knew how Sproull had been killed.

My staff and I worked all through the night. By day-

light I felt justified in making a charge of murder against all four of the prisoners. They took it quietly, but, after the manner of his kind, Morris made a whining appeal to my sympathy when he was being taken before the magistrate.

"Mr. Wensley," he exclaimed, "do all you can for us. We never meant to murder the man, and you don't want to see a couple of young fellows like us topped." "Topped," of course, is a slang term for hanged.

We had known something of each of our four prisoners before the murder, and had long suspected that robbery with violence was not unknown within the four walls of 3 Rupert Street. Marks Reubens called himself a shop assistant and his brother a costermonger, but neither of them did any work. Both, in fact, were vicious parasites kept by the two young women whose manner of life it is perhaps unnecessary to indicate more closely.

At first sight it appeared possible that the girls had deliberately acted as decoys to lure Sproull and his companion to the house to be robbed. It was on the hypothesis that they had taken part in a conspiracy that I charged them with murder. As my reconstruction of the events in connection with the murder proceeded it became apparent that they could have had no part in its planning. I may say here that they were a little later discharged and became reluctant witnesses for the prosecution.

I made some experiments in Room 13. With a light burning inside it was possible for persons looking through the crevice of the shutters from the street to see what was happening within the room and even to overhear a loud conversation. There was no doubt that this was the manner in which the Reubenses had taken their first scrutiny of their victims. They had signalled their arrival to the girls by a tap that was probably unnoticed by the men within and then entered the house—Morris

had a key—and passed through to the back yard. There one of the girls stole out to them and tried—this was her own version—to induce them to go to some other place for the night. They agreed, and she went back, possibly leaving the door of Room 13 open. But the brothers did not go. They stole quietly into the passage and listened for a while. Quite likely they surveyed the scene, either through a crack in the partly opened door or, if it was closed, through the keyhole.

Meanwhile the drunken orgy in the room was approaching a climax. The second mate insisted that it was time to get back to the ship and was urging Sproull to come with him. There began a high-voiced argument. Probably, had they decided to stay, they would have merely been robbed while in a drunken sleep, to wake the next morning in some gutter, with empty pockets and a very hazy recollection of what had occurred. But McEachern's determination seemed likely to prevail. The two listeners were not disposed to let the drunken sailors leave while they still had money, and possibly other valuables, in their pockets.

Suddenly the door was thrown open. Morris, who was carrying a heavy stick of hippopotamus hide—a formidable weapon—rushed into the room, followed by his brother, and struck Sproull a fierce blow on the head. Sproull, a powerfully built man of about thirty-five, got to his feet and showed fight. McEachern, in his own words, "hopelessly drunk," attempted to go to his assistance. The girls rushed from the room. Sober, and in a level fight, the sailors might have held their own. They had, however, been drinking more or less steadily for five or six hours and were taken by surprise.

Somehow, but not without carrying marks of the affray, McEachern got out of the place. As I have said, his mind was a blank on this part of the affair.

Sproull, however, put up a more violent resistance.

The hippopotamus-hide stick had been broken in the struggle and now his assailants resorted to a more deadly weapon. Marks was using a pocket knife with murderous recklessness. Twice Sproull was wounded in the face, and again in the right wrist, but not until he had received the final fatal stab did he give up the struggle. Marks must have led him to the front door, possibly managing roughly to examine his trousers pockets at the same time. A passer-by, whom we traced, had seen him standing by the door with a tall man whose face was bleeding.

"Get out! You don't live here," he exclaimed, and thrusting the other roughly away slammed the door. The words were, no doubt, intended to be overheard by the wayfarer, who, putting his own construction on the incident, passed on.

The dying man reeled and placed his hand on the closed door to steady himself, so leaving that crimson impress that revealed the refuge of his murderers. Then he staggered across the road and sank down to die. Even so, they had not finished with him, for Morris presently crossed the road to secure his gold watch and chain.

A search of the room was made. There was Sproull's overcoat, a bottle of whisky still in one pocket. There was the broken stick and McEachern's smashed bowler hat. In a pail was a smashed tumbler, which might have borne out Morris's assertion that the attack had been provoked when one of the sailors used it as a missile but for the fact that one of the girls told me, just after her arrest, that she had accidentally knocked it from the table and herself put it in the pail.

Although the search of the room went on for many hours, we were long baffled in an attempt to find the knife with which the crime had been committed. Finally I found it hidden behind a gas stove. One of the girls, with some presence of mind, had picked it from the table after the crime and placed it there.

These were the facts on which the case came for trial before Mr. Justice Jelf at the Old Bailey. It was the first murder trial at which he presided and there was some curiosity in legal circles as to the manner in which he would handle it. He took a strong line.

There were dramatic incidents while the case was being heard. I had the door with the bloodstained imprint taken from its hinges and produced in court. Again and again both prisoners interrupted the proceedings with hysterical outbursts, tears and groans. Once Morris had to be laid on the floor of the dock while a doctor attended to him. He was lifted back to his seat, and the trial resumed.

The obvious line of defense was taken—that the prisoners had been provoked into an attack on the sailors and had no intention of robbery or murder, and that, so far as Morris was concerned, he could not have known that his brother would use a knife. This availed nothing, for under the law, if two persons engage in violent crime, each is responsible for the acts of the other. If the prosecution could convince the jury that there had been a concerted and unprovoked attack it did not matter who struck the fatal blow. Mr. Justice Jelf told the jury in summing up that there could be no question of manslaughter—it was murder or nothing.

Twelve minutes after retiring the jury had made up their minds. Both the prisoners, white and sobbing, had to be supported when they were brought up to hear the verdict. Morris was pronounced guilty first. With a piercing shriek he collapsed into the arms of the warders. Recovering himself a little, he stretched out his arms and implored a recommendation to mercy. There was no reply. Marks also was found guilty. For a while he went mad, shrieking and struggling with the warders, while the voice of Morris ceaselessly whining, "Mercy! Mercy!" made a sort of dreadful obbligato.

Both men were sentenced to death and had to be carried bodily from the dock, the one half dead with fear, the other still continuing his demented struggles. They appealed, without avail, and were executed on May 20, 1909. From that date robbery with violence grew unfashionable in East London, and few unaccountable dead bodies were found in the streets.

I may be forgiven for quoting from a newspaper report Mr. Justice Jelf's last words:

> His lordship said he was sure the jury would agree that they owed very much to Detective Inspector Wensley and the other police engaged, and considerable credit was due to those who had taken part in bringing the two men to justice.

Among the few criminal relics that I have preserved is one that was a sequel to this case. Some little time after the execution someone sent me a glass tumbler—one apparently of many that had been manufactured—on the bottom of which had been engraved a sketch of a scaffold with two men hanging. It also bore the inscription, "The Brothers Reubens. The Last Drop."

CHAPTER XI

Siberian Gold

I HAVE never professed to be an actor, but I have at times had to play a character part to a limited audience. The last act of these little dramas has usually been set at the Old Bailey. One of the most entertaining of these episodes occurred during the summer of 1903.

Two suave and businesslike gentlemen, the one a Russian, the other a Rumanian, fell in with a man named Marks, who held a responsible position with some big firm. They were genial souls and apparently took a great fancy to their new acquaintance—so much so that they hinted that they were engaged on an enterprise which promised a fortune. Marks, not unnaturally, was interested, and after a while, with an air of meticulous caution, they let him into the secret.

It appeared that they were in close touch with a Russian officer who was in charge of some of the Siberian gold mines. To them he managed to send parcels of raw gold, and they were prepared—since they believed Marks to be a discreet man—to sell this gold to him or his firm at a heavy discount.

Marks was no fool. He kept the negotiations going and quietly gave a hint to the police. Thus it was that I was deputed to take a hand.

It was arranged that Marks should explain that, while he could not induce his firm to go into the matter, he was prepared to bring them in touch with a man who might be interested. The thing had to be done very carefully,

for we were dealing with very alert and astute men who would be quickly awake to any false move.

I was to become the somewhat wild and reckless son of a well known West End hatter. A furnished house was taken at Camberwell, and there Marks brought one of the men and introduced me. We had taken pains to create an atmosphere. A check book had been thrown carelessly in one corner of the room and an empty champagne bottle in another. I was sprawled in a big arm chair.

No time was lost in getting down to business. Leaning forward till his face was close to mine the man asked portentously, "Can you keep a secret?"

"I have done so," I said.

His acting was perhaps as good as mine. He rubbed his beard with one finger and looked doubtfully round the room. Then, as if suddenly making up his mind to trust me, he leaned forward again.

"I can see you are a business man," he said ingratiatingly, in broken English. "I will now tell you a great secret and if you keep it we can make you very rich. There's an officer in a high position in the Russian army whose authority enables him to get large quantities of gold two or three times a year from the Russian mines across the frontier. The gentleman who used to purchase it is dead. He died worth a lot of money. We want to find another buyer."

Sitting up in my chair a little I asked innocently if the gold was stolen.

He flung up his hands in horror. "I am surprised you should think that. You Englishmen are all alike—you are not clever. You are too straightforward to be clever. We foreigners know the world as you will never know or understand." Getting to his feet he smiled loftily at me. "It is of course what you would call stolen, but the police here cannot touch you. The risk is getting it over

the frontier, and it would mean terrible punishment if they caught them there."

I nodded sapiently. A nugget was produced, and with a bottle of *aqua fortis* he proceeded to demonstrate that it was genuine—as in fact it was.

Then we turned to the question of terms. I became an obstinate haggler. He was prepared to sell the gold at 25 per cent less than the market price, and I insisted that "considering all the risk" I should get it at 50 per cent discount. If he had any suspicion of me it was dissipated by this argument. Finally, we compromised. I was to get it at 35 per cent below the market value.

Although I was the reckless son of a hatter, I had determined to inherit business instincts. As soon as terms had been settled I turned to another point.

How much gold, I asked, did he propose to bring me; and how was I to know that it would be up to the sample? What people would come with him? How was payment to be made?

There was a genuine ring about the laugh with which he greeted my questions. No doubt he felt that I was by now thoroughly duped.

"You are really more clever than I thought," he declared. "I like dealing with clever people. I shall bring you about ninety pounds and everything you want, both to test the gold and to weigh it. You can have Marks to look after your interests, and my principal, the Russian officer, will come with me, as, although he has got confidence in you, I should hardly like him to trust me with so large a quantity."

This arrangement suited me excellently. I promptly agreed, and a day was fixed for the delivery. As he left he asked me for my card.

That was a point I had overlooked. I dared not hesitate. I shook my head, as though I was still slightly distrustful. "I'll give it to you later on," I remarked.

The day came when the appointment was to be kept. It was a blazing hot July afternoon, and two gentlemen left Stepney carrying between them ninety pounds of—brass filings! They had manufactured pads in the nature of breastplates which they wore under their waistcoats, and they appeared to be feeling the heat when they were stopped and arrested by some of my colleagues. Very considerately they had also with them some water in a bottle labelled *aqua fortis* with which I should probably have been allowed to test the "gold."

In the sweltering heat they were marched to the police station. Up to the time they arrived there they knew nothing of the little bit of play-acting in which I had been engaged. It was only when I was called into the charge room to identify them that they realized the "mug" whom they had tried so hard to dupe was a detective. Their faces were a study.

They were ultimately convicted of attempting to defraud me of £2,228, and sentenced to terms of imprisonment.

We learned that they had carried out this trick with some success in a number of countries. As with other forms of the confidence trick, people who have been victimized did not care to prosecute, partly because to do so would have advertised them as fools, partly because they were unwilling to admit that they had attempted to deal in what they supposed was stolen property.

Another occasion on which I stepped outside my proper character is literally a sore memory. There was a big club—mostly used by Germans—where we were pretty sure the limits were outstepped. Gambling, drinking, dancing—particularly organized gambling—were carried on at all hours. Our trouble was to justify action by some direct proof. But, for a time, we were baffled by the wary vigilance of the people who ran the club. It

was absolutely necessary, before we could carry out a raid, that we should have eyewitnesses within the club who would thus be enabled to swear to what had been taking place. Unless that was done any posse of officers would merely have found groups of more or less decorous men and women drinking lemonade and passing the time in innocent conversation.

We discovered, however, that soldiers on leave were particularly encouraged at the club. The hint was enough. I dyed the moustache I sported in those days and procured the uniform of a sergeant major of the Royal Horse Artillery. It fitted without a crease—particularly the breeches. I dwell on these sartorial arrangements because they have some bearing on the point of the story.

Now our scheme was this. With Gill, a colleague of mine also made up as a soldier, I was to enter the place. We were to be given two minutes, and then the blast of a whistle was to signal to other officers back and front of the building, and the raid would be on. A ladder that was being employed in some building operations was to be used at the back to enter the place from a skylight. A moving van was to drive up to the front door, and from it was to emerge the bulk of the storming party—plain-clothes men and officers in uniform.

All went well—to a point. Towards midnight, smoking a cheap cigar, and with my riding whip under my arm, I passed in without question. So did Gill. He took a stand near the bar, which was handy to the front entrance. I passed on to an inner room where a crowd was concentrated about a gambling table, and took up the rôle of an interested spectator.

Two minutes went by. Gill moved to the doorway, and at the first note of his whistle I pushed my way through the gamblers and flung myself face down with hands outstretched across the table. I intended to pin down the cards and the money—there was a very considerable

amount mostly in gold—so that it might be used as evidence.

There was terrible confusion—whistles blowing, men cursing, women screaming. Someone wrenched my whip from me. I cried that I was a police officer, but whether they heard me above the din, or whether, if they heard me, they did not believe me, I never knew. It was my business to keep money and cards as evidence, and I clung tightly to the table.

Sw-i-sh!

I set my teeth, and I am afraid I swore. The man who had snatched my whip, a big powerful brute, was wielding it vigorously across that portion of my anatomy rendered most convenient by my position.

Sw-i-sh! Sw-i-sh! !

The riding whip rose and fell steadily and men tried to pry me loose from my hold. I would have given much to be able to stand up and deal with my assailant, but the crowd of angry Germans would certainly have made short work of the money on the table. I determined to hold out till relief came. It couldn't be long.

Sw-i-sh! Sw-i-sh! Sw-i-sh!

It was a great test of resolution. I felt that I had made a mistake to don the uniform of the R. H. A. What, I wondered, had happened to the other fellows?

In fact, long as it seemed to me, my thrashing probably lasted only a few minutes. Later I learned that some ingenious officer, finding that the door of the moving van would not remain properly closed, had hit upon the idea of locking it. Then, when seconds were of importance, he had forgotten in which pocket he had placed the key! The driver and another man seated with him had dashed to Gill's help, but all they could do was to block the door and prevent anyone leaving. The missing key was at last discovered and our men, not too pleased at the hitch, rushed out. They were unaware of the disguise

I had adopted, and seeing a soldier face downwards on the gaming table were not too tender as they jerked me off the money and the cards.

Days passed before I was able to sit down in comfort. But we had achieved our purpose. No person escaped from the place. Heavy fines were imposed on the principals, and lesser penalties on the frequenters. The club was wiped out.

CHAPTER XII

All Gangs Are Not in Chicago

Any reader of the daily papers these days might come to the conclusion that Chicago is the only place in which organized bands of desperate criminals ever existed. The public has a short memory. It is not so very long ago that we in the East End and some other districts of London were engaged in stamping out groups of criminals, many of whom carried arms, and who waged a sort of warfare among themselves and against the public.

In whatever part of the world this sort of thing happens the methods employed are strikingly similar. They can only be met by determined police action, backed by magistrates and judges equally resolute to protect the community. Gangs breed and increase their activities only when the administration of the law, for whatever reason, is ineffective.

I have read stories in which an atmosphere of romance has been woven about these ruffians. I cannot say I ever found them romantic. They lived mostly by terrorism and blackmail. Sometimes small tradesmen were offered "protection" against other gangs—at a price. If they did not take kindly to this blackmail all sorts of unpleasant things were liable to happen to them. In the main, however, the victims were persons who for some reason or another were a little shy of bringing their troubles to the notice of the police. Keepers of shady restaurants, runners of gambling dens, landlords of houses of resort, street bookmakers, and other people on the fringe of the underworld were among those peculiarly open to

this trouble. Fighting usually began when someone "protected" by one of these gangs attracted the attention of another group.

In the early part of the century there was one gang of this class who had established a real reign of terror among certain people in the East End. They were headed by men who habitually carried loaded revolvers and did not hesitate to use them. One of them at least had been mixed up in a stabbing affair in which a man was killed. Persons who had resisted their extortions had been brutally assaulted, their premises wrecked—in one case an attempt to burn down a building had been made—and any portable property stolen.

Of course, we knew of these things, but so scared were the victims and witnesses that it was usually hopeless for us to make arrests, for we should have been left without evidence. I have even known witnesses disappear rather than take the risk of being "marked" for assisting a prosecution.

There was, however, in the case to which I refer, one bold—or foolish—man who got tired of being bled. He was a street bookmaker. Obviously he could not go to the police, for he could only carry on his business when they were out of the way. So he conceived the idea of enlisting a bodyguard—a man who himself had a reputation for reckless violence. With this man as his companion he felt reasonably safe when in the street. This guardianship, however, he probably felt to be unnecessary in one of his usual haunts, a billiard room which he ran in Old Montagu Street. There, with a brother and his friends, he felt more or less safe. He underestimated the audacity of his enemies.

As he was playing billiards one evening four men swung purposefully into the room. Some of them at any rate meant murder. The first swift blow to the jaw sent the bookmaker reeling, and before he could recover a

second man was raining blows upon him with the butt of a billiard cue. A third had drawn an ugly-looking knife, but, before he could use it, some of the spectators had thrown themselves upon him.

Another member of the gang rushed in with a chopper. "Come out of the way. I'll finish him," he cried, and managed to get in a blow that sent the bookmaker senseless. Someone followed this up by smashing a heavy water jug on the unconscious man's head, and so they left him, no one daring to interfere with their departure.

They had other urgent business to carry through. Their prestige was at stake. The man who had been the bookmaker's bodyguard had to be taught that he could not defy them with impunity.

They ran him down at a public house in the Whitechapel Road and, confiding to the landlord that they meant to "do him in," commenced an attack in which iron bars and chairs were added to their other weapons. This time there was something more of a fight, but, before it was carried too far, the landlord very sensibly sent for the police.

Three men were arrested, and a day or two later a brother officer and I saw a fourth, whom we knew to have been concerned, in a hansom cab in the Whitechapel Road. He saw us almost immediately and urged the cabman—probably unaware of our identity—to put his horse to a gallop. People in the street who saw two men chasing a flying cab may have thought that we were mad. Luckily I was in good condition—which could not be said for the horse—and after a stern chase managed to get it by the head and bring it to a standstill. We arrested the man who was found to be carrying a formidable iron bar, and with cool impudence he told us to settle with the cabman.

All these men were charged with felonious wounding, and at the Old Bailey I told something of their history—

a pretty colourful record, ranging from murderous assault to "purse bouncing"—that is, selling for a shilling a purse in which a number of silver coins have apparently been placed.

Three of them were sent to five years' penal servitude and the fourth to four years'. The latter shook a malevolent fist at me from the dock. "I'll settle with you when I come out," he declared.

The common sergeant gave him a wholesome fright by remarking that he would be put back while the sentence was reconsidered. It was not, however, increased. With their leaders in prison, we had little more trouble with the followers, except as individuals.

There was perhaps even more melodrama in a case which attracted attention some ten years later as "The East End Vendetta," and which culminated in a sort of siege of the Old Street Police Court.

It began with a fight between two members of rival gangs. Victory fell to a fellow nicknamed the "Coon" who almost immediately afterwards received warning that he was "for it." For a while he managed to keep out of the way of his opponent's allies. At last four of them located him in a saloon bar. The Coon, scenting trouble as they entered, suggested an amicable drink. They accepted, but he suddenly received a sharp order to "put his hands up." Very deliberately he was searched for firearms.

"You are a terror," said one man ironically. "You used to threaten people. You won't frighten people any more."

Then the Coon felt a knife drawn across his throat. In a businesslike way some of the others knocked off the tops of glass tumblers against the counter and used the jagged fragments as weapons.

"That's for T——" observed one, as he thrust a glass onto the Coon's face. At this point two of the Coon's

friends intervened, one of them receiving a stab and the other a wound on the head for their pains.

It would have been a gross breach of etiquette to inform the police of this trouble. The Coon's wound, although it left an ugly scar, proved to be superficial, and within a week he had so far recovered as to be able to take part in another development.

There had been some trouble over a stall in a Walthamstow street market, which the owner had transferred from one of the gang's protégés to a friend of his own. Surrounded by four or five gangsters and with a pistol muzzle pressed against his belt, the new stall tenant was warned that he was asking for trouble. Similar threats accompanied by a display of revolvers were made to the stall owner.

Nor were the threats idle. One Sunday morning the stall tenant and a companion were waylaid by a group of armed men near their homes in Bethnal Green. Shots were fired at him, by his own account, from a distance of a few yards, but the marksmanship must have been terribly bad, for he was not touched. Attracted by the shots, a number of police came running up, and the gangs took to flight—all but one youth, who had been shot in the knee and had to be taken to a hospital.

That evening the stall tenant met the Coon, and somewhere near the Hackney Road they were trapped by their opponents in overwhelming force. Again a fight in which knives and revolvers figured was interrupted by the arrival of the police. Possibly this saved the lives of the Coon and his companion who tamely submitted to arrest for disorderly conduct.

A determined attack, made while they were being taken to the police station, was beaten off. Baffled for the moment, the attackers decided to hang on outside the station on the assumption that the others would be released on bail. This scheme was foiled by giving the

prisoners police escort to their homes, and although revolvers were freely brandished and threats uttered, there was no further trouble that night.

The following morning the gang practically blockaded the police court. Both prisoners had to appeal for police protection to enable them to surrender to their bail, and although this served for the moment, they were warned in pretty plain terms that they would be murdered at the first chance that offered.

The magistrate decided to bind the prisoners over. Then arose an acute problem. It had been noticed that the temper of the gang was steadily rising, and it was not beyond the bounds of possibility that the two men would be shot as they left the court. At this juncture a telephone message was sent to me.

Most, although not all, the incidents I have described had happened just outside my division, but many of the actors in them were known to me, especially the leader, a young man of great cunning and astuteness, who had picked up a considerable knowledge of loopholes in the law that had on more than one occasion been of service to him. I resolved to teach them a lesson. Arranging that the Coon and his companion should leave the court at two o'clock I collected eight of my staff, and, borrowing a covered van, drove to a point near the court where we could watch events and take a hand if necessary. I was not at all anxious to disclose our presence until the leaders of the gang had so far committed themselves that we should be reasonably certain of a conviction.

As the Coon and his companion appeared on the steps of the court a mob rushed at them. One man, getting near, drew his fingers significantly across his throat and pointed at the Coon. Others were fingering pistols in their pockets with which they menacingly covered the two men. Still no shots were fired. There were cautious members of the gang who endeavoured to restrain the leaders

from any open attack at so dangerous a spot. Uniformed police thrust the crowd back, and we did not show ourselves. We could at that time have made arrests only on a relatively small charge.

After nearly two hours the two discharged men, with the help of a body of police, managed to get out, and they had got as far as Shoreditch High Street when they were rushed and narrowly escaped with their lives. At this point we made a few arrests, but the leaders evaded us.

I had heard something of the incidents that led up to this business, and, determined to carry it through to a finish, had inquiries pushed, and collected enough evidence to justify me in applying for warrants for the leaders of the gang. They were rounded up by my staff—two of them complaining bitterly that they had been told I wanted to see them on business—and finally they were variously charged with shooting with intent to murder, felonious wounding, and "riotously assembling to disturb the public peace to the terror and alarm of His Majesty's subjects." Our witnesses were nearly as elusive as our prisoners, for both the Coon and the stall keeper were too frightened to appear till we got warrants for them. There was also the manager of a public house who disappeared for a while.

My evidence at the police court was interrupted by the pious wish that I might never leave the witness box alive; that my wife and children might die; and by the declaration that I was an adjective perjurer. However, eight of the worst of the gang were committed for trial at the Central Criminal Court where they were sentenced by Mr. Justice Avory to terms of imprisonment ranging from three years to fifteen months. Relative peace descended on the East End for a while.

One of the chief difficulties in dealing with gangs in Whitechapel was to distinguish between those engaged

in simple hooliganism and those who specialized in organized theft. In fact, the dividing line was very fine. The lodging houses were breeding grounds for ne'er-do-wells and toughs, many of whom were, of course, professional criminals. Some of these lodging houses had accommodation for 600 or 700 men, and at that time there were probably 30,000 or 40,000 men living in Whitechapel lodging houses alone.

The leader of the attack on the police court had, some years before, made a complaint of police persecution and had even appeared before a Royal Commission—which had small difficulty in assessing the value of his evidence. I mention this because a picture of gang methods was given by some of the tradesmen who knew him well. One of them, who had seen one unfortunate thrown through a shop window for interfering with a personal robbery, said they often stood outside his business premises thirty or more strong. This allowed them to see four ways. "They are like a regiment of soldiers. They throw out scouts in every direction and use dumb motions. If they are going to rob a man and see it is convenient to take his watch, they use their fingers, heads, and movements of the body. . . . Big boys get goods off a van, and put them in convenient places, then they get small boys who have not left school to go with a barrow and take the parcels or boxes they have stolen in different directions. . . . A respectable man is in danger in walking through the street."

Another gang of evil reputation in the early part of the century was known as the Bessarabians. It was composed of thirty or forty young foreigners, mainly of Russian extraction, who adopted all the ordinary gang practices, their victims being mainly aliens who were even more loath than Britishers to call for help, or give information to the police. In opposition to them there sprang up a rival organization calling themselves the

Odessians, and regular battles took place between them at times. It was usually futile to make arrests in these cases, for seldom could those concerned be induced to give evidence. One of the leaders of the Odessians had an ear slashed off with a razor and was only saved from death by the arrival of some uniformed police, but he absolutely refused to give any hint of his assailants.

A man believed to be a Russian police officer came to this country for a holiday. Whether the Bessarabians got to know who he was or whether they acted on chance was never certain, but, anyway, he was waylaid, badly knocked about, and robbed of everything he possessed. I managed to get hold of the ringleaders in this job—Max Moses (better known then as Kid McCoy, a first-class boxer with some pretensions to championship class), Barnett Brozishewski, and Joseph Weinstein—and charged them with highway robbery with violence.

They were remanded for a week. In that week the Russian police officer received intimation that it would be extremely unhealthy for him to give evidence, and deciding that discretion was a better part than valour, departed incontinently to spend the rest of his holidays in his own land. As a result, Kid McCoy got away with a small fine, and the others were discharged, the magistrate remarking that they could be rearrested should the prosecutor be found.

A month or two later—in October, 1902—a chance arose of really breaking up the gang. A number of Bessarabians made a raid on the York Minster, a public house in Philpot Street, where a "singsong" was taking place, and began a vicious attack on a portion of the audience whom they supposed to be associated with the Odessians. There was something of a free fight and a struggle on the part of supposed Odessians to escape into the street. Most of them got away, but one man, named Brodovitch, was overtaken, surrounded by several Bes-

sarabians, and stabbed to death. The police arrived and managed to arrest Brozishewski on the spot, and we gathered that Kid McCoy and another leader of the gang, named Samuel Oreman, had been prominent in the affray. Within three days I had traced McCoy to a house in Wharfdale Road, King's Cross, and arrested him. Oreman surrendered himself, and the three were sent for trial.

The case was heard before Mr. Justice Bigham (the late Lord Mersey, whose son, Sir Trevor Bigham, is now the Assistant Commissioner of the C. I. D.) and were convicted of manslaughter. Brozishewski, who was recommended to mercy, got six months' hard labour; Oreman, penal servitude for five years, while McCoy was sentenced to ten years' penal servitude.

With their leaders out of the way, the Bessarabians very shortly afterwards ceased to exist as an organized gang. We dealt with the others in detail as opportunity arose.

CHAPTER XIII

The Curious Affair of Leon Beron

ABOUT some of those criminal cases that have attracted public attention there grows up a mass of myth embroidered on very slight facts—sometimes on no facts at all. So it has been with the case of the murder of Leon Beron. Melodramatic theories have been advanced that Beron was the victim of some secret society that he had betrayed, and that his murderers had carved the letter "S" on both cheeks as a sign of their vengeance. Variations on this theme have been pushed to a ridiculous extent, and most of them hint, or even definitely assert, that the man who was convicted had nothing to do with the crime. I am, I think, the only living person who knows every circumstance of that case, and after twenty years I am still convinced that Stinie Morrison was convicted as justly as any murderer I have ever known.

The thing began, so far as I was concerned, on New Year's Day, 1911. I had my hands pretty full at the time. About a fortnight before, three City police officers had been killed and two others wounded by armed foreign burglars whom they had disturbed at work off Houndsditch. In connection with this we were busy on those investigations that were to lead a day or two later to the battle of Sidney Street. There was also some heavy work in tracing a quantity of valuable property that had been stolen in the provinces. These affairs had kept me up all that night, and about midday I was looking forward to a few hours' rest—it was a Sunday—when Alfred Ward,

the divisional detective inspector of the W Division, appeared with one of his sergeants, "Boxer" Hawkins.

Ward and I were old friends—indeed, we had entered the service at about the same time and had risen step by step together, although we were in different divisions. I had a very affectionate regard for him as a man, and I knew how thorough he was in his work. I knew that it could only be a matter of importance that brought him in person so far from his own district in the southwestern suburbs.

"Fred," he said, "I've come along for your help. There was a murder on Clapham Common last night, and we think the man who was killed may be one of your Yiddish friends. The thing looks as stone cold as it is possible to be. There is not a scrap of anything likely to be of real assistance to us. Mac" (Sir Melville Macnaghten, the then head of the Criminal Investigation Department) "has sent me to see you. You're our only hope."

He gave me such details as were then known. At about eight o'clock that morning a policeman patrolling Clapham Common had found the dead body of a man lying among some bushes. Murder was obvious. He had been killed by several heavy blows on the head and there were a number of knife slashes on the face. In the opinion of the divisional surgeon who was summoned he had probably been killed before three in the morning. The body had been dragged some eight or ten yards from a footpath, where bloodstains indicated that the murder had taken place, to the concealment of the bushes.

Ward, when he searched the dead man's clothes, found a halfpenny, a rent book, a tobacco pouch, and two paper bags, one of which still contained some fragments of a ham sandwich. The rent book indicated that he owned some small houses in the East End. This, I think, was what had brought Ward to me.

As soon as the victim was described to me I remem-

bered him. It chanced that he had been a rather noticeable character in my district. He was Leon Beron, a quaint little Jew of Russian parentage, who had lived in France all his life until he came to Whitechapel, in 1894. Invariably he wore a short overcoat, heavily trimmed with astrachan—and, in fact, had it on at the time of his death. I was able to give Ward a few points about him and his friends and associates. They amounted to this: The man was reputed—I lay stress on the word—to be wealthy, and it was generally supposed that he carried a considerable amount of jewelry and money. He was believed to be fond of the society of women, and there was an impression that he was not unwilling, under favourable conditions, sometimes to dabble in stolen property. All of this was registered roughly on my memory, but, of course, up to then I had never had reason to test its accuracy. It was, in fact, largely gossip that had come to my ears.

Clapham Common is six miles from Whitechapel. Why should Beron, who was a man of set habits, have gone so far from his usual haunts? The probability was that he had been induced to make the journey by someone known to him. This opened up at least three possibilities.

1. A criminal getting him to a lonely spot, at which murder and robbery might conveniently be perpetrated without much risk, on the pretext that he wished Beron to view some stolen property somewhere in the neighbourhood, with a view to purchase.

2. A criminal, knowing Beron's weakness for women, and playing upon it to lure him to Clapham Common for the purpose given above.

3. Less likely, but still possible, was it that some person who had not necessarily deceived Beron as to the object of the excursion had killed him in the course of a sudden quarrel and robbed him as an afterthought.

In any of these cases it was reasonable to assume that the murderer (or murderers) was no stranger to Beron. The crime was brutally determined. No chance was taken that the little Jew might survive to tell of his assailant—or assailants.

There remained a fourth possibility—revenge. This was improbable in the extreme. Neither Ward nor I was inclined to believe in this motive, although we did not entirely dismiss it. Subsequent events showed that there was no justification for some of those wild and far-fetched theories to which I have already referred. It was part of my job to know a good deal of foreign revolutionaries in my district, and Beron had nothing to do with them. He was not a spy, an *agent provocateur,* a member of any secret society, or an informer.

These silly stories were, I think, provoked by two circumstances. One was that the murder happened to coincide with the Sidney Street affair, in which the protagonists bore Russian names; the other was that during the inquest the doctor, in attempting to describe in simple terms the knife slashes on the dead man's face, spoke of two S-shaped wounds. Of course, the newspapers fastened on the remark as a dramatic point. There was, it was true, a wound on one cheek that very remotely resembled the letter "S." On the other was another slash that might have been an "S" in reverse. I shall adopt Mr. Justice Darling's words: "Anyone who sees the letter 'S' in either of these scratches has either better eyes or a more vivid imagination than I can possibly claim to possess." In any event, we paid no more attention to them than we did to others of the eighteen wounds that had been inflicted.

Although I figured prominently in this case, I should like to make it clear that it was only incidentally my business. The crime had taken place on Ward's ground, and he was primarily responsible for the investigation. I gave

him such advice and assistance as was within my power.

The first step to be taken was to find out with whom Beron had been associating. With the information I had given him, Ward set to work. He lost no time, for the following day he again came to me at Leman Street Police Station.

"Well, we've placed Beron now," he remarked. "He was seen in Whitechapel early on Sunday morning with a tall man."

He had found a Mrs. Deitch, who knew Beron well. She had been returning with her husband from a New Year's party sometime in the early morning when, in Commercial Road, E., she noticed Leon Beron, who was walking with a tall, well dressed man—a stranger to her—of whom she gave a vague description. Among other things she noticed that he was wearing a long overcoat.

Hazy as the description was, it struck a chord in my memory. "I know this man," I exclaimed. "I have seen him quite recently—within this last month or two. He has not long been out of prison and was reporting here—and may be doing so now for aught I know."

It was quite a fortuitous bit of luck that I remembered him, for I had only seen him once. All that I really knew about him, offhand, was that he had served a term of penal servitude and been released on license. Under the terms of that license he was bound to report to the police periodically. I had chanced to see him as he entered the police station one day on this errand and had been struck by his appearance. Thus I had learned that he was a man "on ticket."

He was, however, easy to recall, for he was of striking personality, tall—well over six feet—handsome and well spoken. Moreover, his dress was distinctive, for he affected a sort of colonial attire topped by a broad-brimmed hat. That long overcoat of which Mrs. Deitch spoke had remained in my memory, for it had a feature then new to

me, though it is now common—a band of cloth on the sleeves by which they could be tightened at the wrists as a protection against the wind.

Now this surmise of mine might have meant nothing. The man I had in mind might not, after all, have been the man seen by Mrs. Deitch. Even if he was, the place where she had seen him with Beron was miles from Clapham Common and might have been—for she was a little uncertain of the exact time—hours before the murder. The meeting might have been quite a casual incident. Beron might have spoken to a dozen men that night. Certainly it was far from proving that anyone was guilty of murder.

I sent for the Convict Register, and Ward and I ran over it. The name of the man I remembered was given as Morris Stein, alias Tagger, whose record as a burglar and thief went back for twelve years, when he would have been about seventeen or eighteen years old. He had been released on license on September 17, 1910, and at first lodged in my district and reported to my station. At this point we ran against a startling and unexpected fact. Stein was recorded as having left Whitechapel and gone as an assistant to a baker at Lavender Hill, Clapham Junction—less than ten minutes' walk from where the murder had taken place!

The coincidence was too remarkable to remain unexplored. Here was a man with a bad criminal record living in close proximity to the scene of the murder, while a man resembling him had been the last person seen with Beron on the night of the tragedy.

Oddly enough, I was the only man in the division who actually knew Stein, for his earlier criminal activities had taken place in other districts. I set some of my staff to make rapid inquiries at places in the neighbourhood where Stein might possibly be found. They discovered that although he had been much about Whitechapel up to within

an hour or two of the murder, since that time he had not been seen at his usual haunts. Meanwhile, Ward departed to Clapham to put inquiries on foot there.

That night was the third in succession that I was out of bed. We were closing in on the Houndsditch murderers, and in fact the battle of Sidney Street broke out on the following morning (January 3d). It was there, while the fight was in progress, that Ward came to me. Stein had, it appeared, left his job at Lavender Hill on November 10th. No one knew where he had gone, and he had failed to report at the local police station. Here was food for thought. Murder or no murder, this failure to comply with the terms of his release had made him liable to summary arrest. We had a hasty discussion, and I got Ward to see that it would be premature to raise a hue and cry against him as a murderer.

"It seems to me," I observed, "that the best thing we can do is to circulate Stein's description in *Police Informations* as wanted for failing to notify his change of address. I have learnt that he carries a pistol. That had better go in."

Ward agreed. Some little time later I saw Sir Melville Macnaghten, and, standing with him at a point from which we could observe the assassins returning the fire of the police and soldiers, I told him of the developments and what we proposed to do—pointing out that it would give us the right to ask Stein to account for his movements from the date on which he had left his last-known address. Although the circumstances looked suspicious, we were still miles removed from proving that the man had anything to do with the murder.

He was delighted at my news. "I told Ward that Fred Wensley wouldn't let him down," he commented. "I think that your suggestion is the proper and prudent"—he was fond of that word—"course to adopt."

As we talked a bullet smacked viciously against the

wall behind us. We had attracted the attention of the besieged men. The hint to move could not be ignored, and a minute later a storm of bullets swept the spot where we had been standing.

This was the notice that went in *Informations* under the heading "Wanted for Petty Offenses."

> C. O. (C. S. O.) License-holder Morris Stein, office No. 141,701, for failing to reside at his registered address. Caution: Carries firearms and may attempt to use them.

Besides circulating Stein as "wanted" we organized a wide network of inquiry. Every place where he had been seen at any time was closely covered—in particular a house in Newark Street. Detectives watched the place from a room opposite. There he had rented one of four rooms occupied by a Jewish family—for which he had paid three shillings a week—for about a month before the murder. He had disappeared from there on New Year's Day or on New Year's Eve. We deliberately avoided making inquiries from the occupants that might have come to his ears, but we knew that there was waiting there some of his linen that had been returned from a laundry. There was just the off-chance that he might return to collect it.

Eight days passed. At a little after nine o'clock on the Sunday after the discovery of the murder two detectives —Jefferies, one of my men, and Bellinger from Ward's division—saw our man enter the house in Newark Street. In a few minutes he emerged, and they shadowed him to a place in the Commercial Road where he made a call, and thence to a little restaurant in Fieldgate Street. They saw him seat himself at a table and sent for me.

I got hold of two of my sergeants, who lived close to my house—Brogden and Dessent—and made for Field-

gate Street. Thus there were five of us to make the arrest of one man. This overwhelming display of force to take a man for a minor offense was commented upon later by the defense at the trial. In fact, it was a very carefully considered precaution. Quite apart from the belief that the man was armed and would probably not hesitate to shoot, he might, by the time we arrived, have evaded his shadowers. In that case it would have been necessary for me to dispatch officers to various points very hurriedly.

In view of what followed, I should like to make it plain that none of the officers had been told the man was suspected of murder, although it is possible that they may have drawn the inference from my presence at the arrest that the capture was one to which I attached importance. Apart from Ward and myself there were only two other people who then knew what was behind it. They were Sir Melville Macnaghten and Mulvaney, the superintendent of the division. All that my assistants knew was that Stein was a desperate man, probably armed.

Indeed, up to that moment the evidence we could have brought to support a charge of murder was not strong. By this time we had found a few people besides Mrs. Deitch who had seen a tall man—who might have been Stein—with Beron on and before New Year's Eve. We had also discovered a cabman who had driven two men —the description of one resembling Stein—from Kennington Church, within a mile or two of Clapham Common, to Finsbury Park in North London, at half-past three on the morning of New Year's Day. None of these had yet, of course, had an opportunity to identify Stein.

Our man was breakfasting at a table just inside the door. Before he could realize our purpose we had seized him.

"Stein, I want you," I said.

Brogden immediately put his hand to the prisoner's pocket in search of a revolver. There was none there,

but his action immediately provoked the cry, "Don't go putting anything into my pockets."

He complained bitterly that we had made "a big blunder," as we took him to the station. There I asked him formally for his name and address. He retorted that I knew his name and that he was living in Whitfield Street, W., and that he had for a week been living with a girl at a house in York Road, Lambeth. I told him that he would be detained, but was very careful to give him no hint of the charge.

I telephoned to Ward to come over, but before he arrived I was told that the prisoner wanted to see me again. I went to him.

"You have accused me of murder," he declared. "I want to make a statement."

I replied that I had done nothing of the sort, and the significance of his remark at once flashed across my mind. Why should he have associated his detention with a murder charge? I refused to take the statement myself—although, of course, I might have done so—pointing out that he had better wait for Ward, who was dealing with the matter.

When Ward turned up the statement was taken. In it the suspect gave his name for the first time as Stinie Morrison and reiterated that I had told him he was arrested for murder. He said that he was an Australian, born in Sydney but brought up in England. His trade was that of a baker, but, having saved £4 while he was at Lavender Hill, he had set up as a traveller in cheap jewelry. For two weeks he had lived in a house in Grove Street, Whitechapel, and had then moved to 91 Newark Street, Whitechapel, which he had left on New Year's Day. Since then he had been staying with a girl at York Road, but the night before his arrest he had found lodging with a friend in James's Street.

Every person and place he spoke of had now to be

visited, and the rest of the day was taken up with a large number of inquiries. On the following morning we had several persons whose evidence might be of value brought to the police station, and Morrison—as I shall now call him—was put up among a number of other men for identification.

Every witness recognized him, and we were thus enabled to carry the case a definite stage further, for we could now show that he was a man who had been associating with Beron and had been with him up to within an hour or two of the murder. We were very, very far from proving him guilty, but we had accumulated a very black cloud against him.

This is where we stood: We had four men from a little restaurant in Osborn Street, where Beron habitually had his meals, to prove that Morrison had been much in his company for weeks past, and that they left the restaurant together just before midnight on December 31st. Before leaving, Morrison had collected from a waiter in whose charge it had been left, a long brown-paper parcel that felt as if it contained a bar of iron. Another waiter had seen Morrison with a pistol. This man had also happened to see Beron and Morrison together in the Whitechapel Road at a quarter to two the next morning. There was Mrs. Deitch, who had seen them in the Commercial Road at some time after two, and Alfred Castlin, a taxicab driver, who unhesitatingly picked out Morrison as one of the two men he had driven from the neighbourhood of Kennington Church at half-past three in the morning.

In searching the room in York Road, Lambeth, Ward had come across—hidden in the lining of a bowler hat—a cloakroom ticket for a parcel left at St. Mary's Railway Station, Whitechapel. That parcel contained a revolver and a box of cartridges. A railway clerk identified Mor-

rison as the man who had deposited them there—in a false name—at eleven o'clock on the morning of January 1st. It was at least significant that Morrison should have got rid of them in this surreptitious fashion so shortly after the murder.

CHAPTER XIV

Stinie Morrison

THERE were vital gaps in the chain that we had forged against Morrison, but we decided that we had enough to justify a charge of murder. The late Sir Richard Muir became the leading counsel for the prosecution, and he was a man who not only never spared himself, but saw that those concerned with him missed no point.

Not that Ward or I needed any urging. We were determined to clear up the case, and our staffs, with willing zeal, worked themselves remorselessly. "Boxer" Hawkins, Ward's right-hand man, fell ill. His place was taken by a young and enterprising officer whom I met for the first time and who impressed me by his ability and energy. This was Charles Cooper, who, after a brilliant detective career, is now one of the area superintendents at Scotland Yard. Events have proved that my judgment of his capacity was not wrong.

Among other things, we advertised and made inquiry among all the cabmen in London. Thus we found a hansom-cab driver who had picked up two men in the Mile End Road at two o'clock on the morning of New Year's Day and driven them to Lavender Hill. His description of one of them corresponded with Beron. He identified Morrison as the other. On that same morning another hansom-cab driver picked up a fare at Clapham at a little past three and drove him to Kennington. He, also, identified Morrison.

Unless our witnesses were lying or had made some egregious mistake, we had now, as the reader will ob-

serve, fixed a damning chain of times and places against Morrison. Ward and Cooper, using, I believe, the actual cabs that had been concerned, made careful tests of the times that would be occupied on the respective journeys, including a walk from Lavender Hill to the scene of the murder, and thence to Kennington Cross. The only time unaccounted for was the half hour (approximately) between the moment when Morrison and his companion were set down in Lavender Hill and the picking up of Morrison alone at Kennington Cross.

Other facts began to accumulate. Small spots of blood were distinguished on the shirt and collar Morrison was wearing when arrested—although it was difficult to understand why he should be wearing bloodstained linen a week after the murder. We unearthed more people who had seen Morrison and Beron together shortly before the murder. We discovered that Morrison had pawned a watch and chain a couple of days before Christmas—the inference being that he was short of money—and yet we found £24 on him when he was arrested, including two five-pound notes which had passed through the hands of a receiver of stolen property, although this was not clearly brought out at the trial. On New Year's Day Morrison had obliged a man with change for a check for £4, and had taken the money from a bag that contained banknotes. At the same time he had presented a girl with a couple of sovereigns.

One of our great troubles was that we had to seek for certain of our evidence among foreign Jews, many of whom were illiterate and unreliable and some of them speaking very little or no English. There was one who, after definitely identifying Morrison as a man who he knew carried a revolver and whom he had seen with Beron at half-past two on the morning of the murder, retracted his evidence. There was a girl with whom Morrison had been flirting—he was something of a gallant—

who swore that on New Year's Day she saw him wearing for the first time a five-guinea gold piece on his watch chain. Now, Beron had sported this unusual coin on *his* watch chain, and it would have been strong evidence against Morrison that he should have been possessed of one a few hours after the murder. She also came to me and withdrew her statement. I, of course, sent her to the lawyers for the defense. An unsuccessful but determined attempt to charge her with perjury was made by them. At the trial much play was made with these incidents by defending counsel.

Before I come to the dramatic incidents of the trial I will refer to a point upon which there has been much discussion. It was always our view that Morrison was not alone in the murder—indeed, this was clearly indicated in the case for the prosecution. We knew the other man, also a criminal, and there was at one time a possibility that we might arrest him. In the very early stages of the case, had I been solely concerned I might have taken the responsibility of arresting him, although the evidence that we could legally have brought against him was very weak. Ward, however, feared that to put him on trial would add fresh complications to an already difficult case, and thought that a jury might become so bewildered that both murderers would escape.

Morrison must have had some strong reason for so assiduously cultivating the society of Beron. Anxious to find an associate, he had turned to a man with a bad criminal record—who had already had the cat for robbery with violence—and pointed out that the risk of attacking him might well be worth while—even if it came to "outing dues" (murder). The other listened but was not easily persuaded.

"I don't think I'll go in with you," he finally said in effect. "You know what I've had. I've lost my nerve. I can always get a pound or two without doing this."

There is a kind of tacit understanding among certain types of criminals that unless there is an intention of co-operation a man shall be stopped before he has confided the details of a project to another. It is not considered playing the game to listen to things of this sort, because the second man may inadvertently or otherwise afford a link between the criminal and the crime.

The refusal provoked Morrison to violent rage. "You let me cough up all this stuff about this good job, and now you're going to back out," he exclaimed with violent expletives. Suddenly pulling a revolver he added, "I've a good mind to put a bullet through you."

We did, in fact, learn of this incident, but it was impossible to use it at the trial. Quite apart from the character of the man I have mentioned, which would have made him a doubtful witness, the conversation did not in itself prove a plan to rob and murder Beron. No name had been mentioned. The scheme might have referred to someone else.

Failing in his attempt to get assistance from this man, Morrison turned in another direction to a man who is referred to by the Hon. H. Fletcher Moulton in his interesting introduction to the report of Morrison's trial as X. X was also a man of bad reputation and was known to have been intimate with Morrison. There was reason to suspect him, but not a scrap of evidence to connect him directly with the murdered man, as was the case with Morrison. During the investigation we interviewed a woman with whom he was living, but her statement did not help.

Mr. Fletcher Moulton mentions that in 1912, when there was a renewed agitation for a revision of Morrison's sentence, a statement was made by a woman with whom X was living. She said that on the night of the murder he had gone out about eleven o'clock and had not returned for three days, when his shirt was covered in

blood. To her inquiries he replied that he had been in a fight. Tearing the shirt up, he burnt it, threatening to kill the woman if she spoke of the incident. The story is confirmed in the reminiscences of Mr. Abinger, who acted as counsel for Morrison. He records a dramatic episode when Ward was called to the Home Office to question this woman on her statement in Mr. Abinger's presence.

"By the way," said Ward, "when your husband went out on the night of December 31st, was he alone?"

"No," said the woman.

"In whose company was he?"

"He was with Stinie Morrison."

Allowing for a slip of the memory in some details, this story was probably somewhere near the truth. The name of the man we suspected was known to the defense at the time of the trial. Naturally, the Crown did not call him as a witness; equally naturally the defense did not. I know the man left the country some time after, and I heard that he had been executed for a murder and robbery in the United States, although I never troubled to verify the report.

If this man did play a part in the murder, many points would be explained—the comparative shortness of the death struggle, the use of a knife as well as a jemmy, the absence of anything but trivial bloodstains upon Morrison's clothes. It is even remotely conceivable that Morrison, although present, took no part in the actual killing—although that would make him none the less guilty of murder. That theory would make his later attitude understandable to some extent, because he might have imagined himself innocent of murder if he had not struck the fatal blow.

As a matter of surmise, something like this may have happened. Morrison probably arranged that X was to be in waiting at a point on Clapham Common. The moment Beron was brought there X sprang at him. Immedi-

ately after the crime the two murderers went different ways, having agreed to meet at some later time, when things had quietened down—a common practice with criminals of this type. Morrison, on whom there were no pronounced bloodstains, took the property, and it is not impossible that the man with whom he drove away from Kennington Cross was a receiver whom he met by appointment. Morrison may have expected to get from Beron a quantity of precious stones which the little Jew was rumoured always to carry on his person, and arranged to hand them over as quickly as possible to someone who could easily dispose of them. Unset stones are not readily identifiable. Receivers, of course, are chary of taking identifiable stuff that might be connected with a murder, but it is conceivable that in some circumstances they might do so. It is possible that the receiver knew nothing of the murder at the time. If he did he would only have taken the stolen articles for one of two reasons —that their identity could be readily destroyed, or because he was willing to assist a thief towards whom he might be under some obligation.

Few trials in England have caused such wide and intense interest. Not only the circumstances of the crime, but the personality of the handsome, intelligent young Jew who was the central figure of the drama, arrested public attention. Ample funds for his defense were forthcoming—I believe provided by prominent members of the Jewish community.

The leading counsel for the defense was the late Mr. Edward Abinger, a gentleman of excitable and emotional temperament, who, with a fervid belief in his client's innocence, stuck at little in his attempts to secure an acquittal and was responsible for some remarkable scenes. I have never seen witnesses more viciously attacked, so perhaps I can claim little credit for being selected as the arch villain of the piece—a police officer willing to hound

an innocent man to death by perjured evidence! Ward, on the other hand, I suppose for the sake of contrast, was depicted as something of a saint. Here is a little extract from the proceedings:

Mr. Abinger: I am suggesting that Inspector Ward gave his evidence as an honest, upright, honourable officer.

Mr. Justice Darling: That is not the point at all.

Mr. Abinger: That is the point I shall make to the jury.

Mr. Justice Darling: And that this officer [myself] is not?

In his reminiscences Mr. Abinger protested that it was "extremely unfair" that he should have been criticized for treating the witnesses for the prosecution as a collection of perjurers. The convolutions of the defense were endless, and Ward and I were in constant touch with Muir to make inquiries into all sorts of wild suggestions. I do not propose to discuss all the innumerable red herrings that were used for purposes of distraction.

Mr. Abinger was pitted against a man who, in my opinion, was the most able and thorough at the criminal bar, and whose calm, solid common sense never failed to bring the jury back to the real point of issue. Then there was the judge—now Lord Darling—scrupulously fair, but occasionally checking the looseness of the defense with polished irony when Mr. Abinger went a little too far.

The root of defense was an alibi. There was no denial that Morrison had been at Snelwar's restaurant on New Year's Eve and that at eight o'clock he had left a parcel —which the defense said contained a flute that he had bought that day—with one of the waiters. Then he had gone to the Shoreditch Empire, a music hall, where he

had been observed by two young Jewesses with whom he afterwards became friendly. These girls, however, could not remember, when cross-examined, what artistes had appeared, and it chanced that the price of admission had been raised on that particular night so that they could not have obtained seats at the price they declared they paid.

It was admitted that Morrison went back to Snelwar's and, after having some refreshment, asked the waiter for his parcel and left at about a quarter to twelve. He was said to have passed Beron, who was with a tall man, on his way home to Newark Street. His landlady and her husband—two foreign Jews—gave evidence that they let him in about midnight and had seen him in the morning when he left at about nine o'clock. This story was supported by a woman living next door.

Attempts were made, rather clumsily, to explain away some of the other suspicious circumstances. The revolver had been placed in the cloakroom on New Year's Day because Morrison believed it might frighten the girl with whom he was temporarily living. The bloodstains on his shirt and collar were caused by his nose bleeding. He had not been in want of money during December because his mother had sent him some from Russia and he had won another £28 playing faro at a gambling club. And, a point that concerned me personally, I was said to have exclaimed when he was arrested, "Stein, I want you *for murder.*"

The reader may get the atmosphere of the trial if I recall something of the other part of the line Mr. Abinger took. He used the so-called "S" marks to suggest that vengeance, not robbery, was the motive for the murder —that they might have stood for "spic" or "spickan" (Russian and Polish for "spy") or "sorregio," the Camorrist sign. This he connected with the fact that Beron had lived in Jubilee Street, and that in the same street

there had once existed an anarchist club which had been closed, to suggest the theory that Beron might have been murdered by associates of the Sidney Street assassins. He even, as an alternative, hinted—until sharply brought up by the judge—that a brother of the dead man might have had a hand in the murder.

One of the witnesses was questioned as to whether he had ever attempted to commit suicide and been confined in a lunatic asylum. Mr. Justice Darling interposed a warning that to accuse a witness of an attempted felony would, as the law stood, free the hands of prosecuting counsel so that he might cross-examine the prisoner as to his own character. Mr. Abinger persisted.

He went further, for he—acting, as he said, on instructions—accused Mrs. Deitch of being the keeper of a brothel. Let me quote his own words:

"The following day the solicitor for the defense produced six rather bedraggled ladies. I asked Mrs. Deitch whether she knew any of them, and she said, 'No,' whereupon there was a chorus of 'Liar!' I could not, of course, call any of them into the witness box, by the rules of evidence which obtain, and the matter ended there." I may add that these ladies might have had some difficulties had it been allowable to cross-examine them.

It was the aspersions made upon Mrs. Deitch that allowed Sir Richard Muir to make that searching cross-examination into Morrison's past and reveal to the jury the type of man that he was.

There was a very singular incident on the eighth day of the trial, when Mr. Abinger was concluding his address to the jury. A half-witted brother of the murdered man had stolen close to counsel and suddenly rushed at him with upraised fists and a sharp order to stop. He was seized and dragged away before any damage was done.

The case seemed to be drawing to a close. Sir Richard Muir had begun his final speech with, for him, an unusual

display of feeling, in a stinging and dignified reproof of his adversary. "It has been suggested time and again that it is consistent with the duty of counsel for the Crown to suppress facts, to argue upon untenable bases for the purpose of obtaining a verdict. This was done by my learned friend who pours out upon me compliments . . . about my being the soul of honour. Heaven save me from the compliments of my learned friend if that is his sense of honour and duty." He spoke of Mr. Abinger's attitude to the police. Complaints were made of their conduct. They were varied. From time to time they were interlarded with compliments of which there was no stint at all, from the highest to the lowest. First of all the poison was put forward; then the responsibility for laying that poison in the minds of the jury was avoided by complimenting the police and saying, "I make no insinuation; he is an officer of the highest character," and so on.

The morning of the ninth day produced a sensation. Mr. Abinger was granted leave to call fresh evidence and put into the box a constable named Greaves, who was attached to Leman Street Police Station. This man had offered to give evidence for the defense. The effect of his evidence was that shortly after Morrison had been brought in he had heard Detective Sergeant Brogden tell him that he was detained on suspicion of murder. If he was believed, then those of my staff who had denied that the word "murder" had been mentioned had been guilty of perjury. I myself had chanced to be out of the room at the moment that the alleged remark was made.

Greaves fared very badly under cross-examination. He admitted that he had been suspended by a discipline board for making untruthful statements against his superior officers. I myself had reprimanded him for writing wild letters to me, making utterly unfounded accusations against certain people in connection with the Sidney Street business.

Mr. Justice Darling remarked that the point was a very small one so far as the case against Morrison was concerned; but, of course, so serious a charge against police officers could not be permitted to rest. Later, a Home Office inquiry was held by Mr. Cave, K. C. (afterwards Lord Chancellor), and he held that the word "murder" had never been mentioned to Morrison by either Brogden or myself. He described Greaves as an "eccentric" who might have deceived himself. In the course of the inquiry Mr. Abinger remarked that he had made no suggestion against Ward or myself and that he thought we had given absolutely truthful evidence on every point. Here is a little extract from the proceedings.

Mr. Abinger: We know you are a good-natured man.

Myself: You have not always said so, Mr. Abinger.

Mr. Abinger: Not before I knew you, but I know you better now.

It would have been even more graceful of Mr. Abinger to make his opinion clear in his account of the trial that was published a year or two ago.

Mr. Justice Darling's summing up was a model of lucidity and fairness, leaning if anything in favour of the prisoner. The jury consulted for thirty-five minutes and then returned with a verdict of Guilty.

Morrison immediately admitted from the dock that his account of the funds of which he had been in possession after the murder was false—that he could prove that in November he had three hundred pounds. Would that, he asked, alter the verdict?

According to Mr. Abinger, Morrison later explained to him that this money was the proceeds of a bank forgery, and that he had not said anything about it before,

because he was convinced that he would be acquitted and did not want to run the risk of being tried for the other offense.

Mr. Justice Darling passed sentence of death, and a passionate outburst by Morrison concluded the trial. An appeal was lodged, and fresh evidence in the shape of a statement by a little girl that she had handled the parcel left by Morrison with the waiter at Snelwar's restaurant, and that it "was lighter than a soda-water bottle" was allowed. The appeal, however, was dismissed.

Strenuous efforts were made to secure a reprieve, and Mr. Abinger stated that several people in distinguished positions became interested. Morrison, himself, he added, declined to sign a petition for reprieve although his counsel, with tears, implored him to do so.

As everyone knows he was reprieved and became one of the most troublesome prisoners with whom the prison authorities ever had to deal. I only know what I have read of him since. In one violent outburst he held a dozen or more warders at bay, and later sneered as he took a heavy flogging. He made a futile attempt to drown himself in a pond, and discovered that it was simply mud covered with a few inches of water. There was also an attempt at hunger-striking. He died in prison at the beginning of 1921.

I really felt the need of a rest after this case, and I remember the very human way in which my application for leave was received. Sir Melville Macnaghten endorsed it:

> Divisional Inspector Wensley has been hopelessly overworked for the last three months and is perilously near a breakdown. I cannot speak in sufficiently high terms of the work he has done and I strongly recommend that he be granted special leave for fourteen days.

To this the commissioner (Sir Edward Henry) appended the note:

> I entirely concur. I will sanction as much special leave in excess of fourteen days as may be required, so that Mr. Wensley may have a real good rest.

There were letters of thanks from Sir Charles Mathews, the Director of Public Prosecutions, Sir Richard Muir himself, and from Messrs. Wontner, the police solicitors, the latter speaking of the "mental and physical strain" I had undergone and emphasizing the fact that Muir had been "no light taskmaster." Both Ward and I received steps in promotion.

CHAPTER XV

A Note on Criminals

THERE can be few, if any, living men who have known more criminals than I have. I have found all sorts among them—men and women with good qualities and defects. They cannot be lumped together any more than any other class of the community. Between them can be found every degree of cleverness and foolishness, bravery and cowardice, generosity and meanness.

Crime is rarely deliberately adopted as a career. Every thief at the beginning intends to reform sometime—later. He is just out for a good time. It looks easy to make hundreds, perhaps even thousands, a year with comparatively little effort. When he is caught—as he assuredly will be—and has passed through a few terms of imprisonment, he determines to regain the position in life that he might have held but for his lapses.

Then his difficulties begin. Whatever his former position in life, he finds that he is no longer on an equal footing with others. There exist organizations to help discharged prisoners, but there are obvious limits to the assistance they can give. If he goes to one of them, the best that they will be able to offer him is a job at some form of manual or mechanical clerical labour at a pound or two a week—and he has acquired expensive tastes. Where else can he go? No one is likely to trust him in a position of even minor responsibility where there is a possibility of promotion. Whatever sympathy an employer has for him, there are other employees to be considered. Suppose that he changes his name and forges references,

or by some miracle gains a position in which his abilities have scope. What then of the hundreds of fellow crooks who have known him in prison? There is always the very likely chance of one of these running against him and betraying him. Men have tried to run straight and given up the attempt in despair. The brand is on them. They cannot get out of the groove. Among them have been people of great talents, forced on the human scrapheap. Ex-convicts cannot mix with any society except their own. The only reformed thieves who have a chance of making good are those who have been able to start some individual business—and that usually needs capital. I can offer no solution. I state the case as it appears to me.

Many criminals wish to reform, even after years of ill-doing. But it takes a force of character to persist that few of them possess, and, as I have pointed out, the odds are heavily against them. And it is only human nature to distrust them. The hypocrites largely outnumber the genuine cases. Beyond them is a still larger class who frankly admit that they would not reform if they could. They have no taste for disciplined work or avoidable hardship. No criminal has ever lived a hermit's life except in prison. The end of all these people is the same. Whatever money they may make they die poor, and, in the majority of cases, practically friendless.

There are, as I have said, great differences between criminals. Take, for instance, the burglar and the housebreaker. Most people think that the terms mean practically the same thing. Legally the only distinction is that one enters houses and robs at night, and the other in the daytime. But the two types are as wide apart as the poles.

The ordinary housebreaker has neither skill nor courage. He is a cowardly thief. His method of work calls for little ingenuity. Selecting a likely house he will knock at a door and make some excuse should it be answered. If there is no reply he gets in by some unfastened window or

by forcing a latch. The only opposition he is likely to encounter is from some feeble woman or decrepit old man. He will collect any portable property, without much discrimination, and decamp.

There are, of course, exceptions. We were once puzzled by an epidemic of housebreaking that went on for a considerable time. It was, as we finally discovered, carried out by a gang of three men and two women who had hit on an extremely clever device.

They made tours with a laundry van. The men never showed themselves. One of the women would knock at the door of a house supposed to be empty, and if there was no reply the knock would be repeated. Once sure that the house was empty a signal would be given to the men and an entry forced. The place would then be ransacked from ground floor to attic, and the women would carry the loot out to the van in laundry baskets. There was nothing to attract the suspicion of passers-by. These coups might have been carried on for years if one of my staff had not managed to get in touch with a criminal whom he had found to be a very reliable informant on matters where he himself was not concerned. We captured the whole gang and at their "lumber shed" discovered an incredible amount of stolen property of all sorts that they had amassed.

A housebreaker is hardly ever found working with a burglar. The burglar, as a rule, is a man of nerve and resource. The housebreaker has no stomach for taking the risks of night work. That "two-o'clock-in-the-morning" courage is not common.

Some burglars know this and act deliberately on the assumption that there are few people anxious to take the chance of an encounter with a possibly desperate man in the dark. I have even known police officers hesitate to search a house in which thieves were suspected. One burglar, who met with some success before we put an end

to his career, told me that he never felt the slightest concern about being interrupted. People, if they were disturbed, were scared to death and never went near him. More than once he had known the occupant of a room to be feigning sleep. While robbing a certain country house he knew that he was being watched by the butler while he cut a picture from its frame. Even on those rare occasions when an alarm was raised pursuit was often nothing but a bluff.

There is, however, no real reason why any normal person with assistance within reach should be afraid to tackle a burglar. The thief knows that if he uses physical violence he risks a much-increased sentence, and he will not as a rule take the gamble.

Time was when the burglar conducted his operations on cruder lines than he does to-day. On the whole, the fraternity have become more skilled and intelligent. Mostly they work alone, or perhaps with one associate. They take no unnecessary risks. When they set out to "do a job" they very seldom carry tools lest they should be stopped by a police officer whose suspicions have been aroused by some circumstance. They rely on what they may find, perhaps in some outhouse, or inside the house itself. If tools have to be carried they will most likely be entrusted to some confederate who has never done a day's imprisonment in his life. The tools used by a burglar are employed in many honest trades, and if they should be found in the possession of the assistant there may be no way of proving that they were intended for a nefarious purpose.

An instance of the quick wit of one burglar—I had it from his own lips—may be quoted. He had robbed a big country house, and in the early hours of the morning was making his escape on a bicycle when the burly figure of a county constable loomed up in front of him. He felt certain that he would be questioned, and perhaps the

heavy package on the back of his machine examined—unless he acted quickly. Dismounting, he accosted the officer with an inquiry whether he was on the right road to such-and-such a place. Without waiting to be questioned, he volunteered the information that he had been visiting a friend at some out-of-the-way village and had missed the last train. He had borrowed a bicycle because he had urgent business in town that could not be postponed. The ride had taken it out of him, and he was dog-tired. Would the officer be a good fellow and help him to push his bicycle up the hill that was in front of them? The policeman, entirely unsuspicious, was quite willing to do a good turn to the tired wayfarer. He helped to push the bicycle, stolen goods and all, to the top of the hill. The stranger was exceedingly grateful and, rewarding the other with a two-shilling piece, rode away.

"That," he told me, "was literally the last coin I had in the world. I often wondered what the policeman thought when he returned to his beat and was told of the burglary."

One of the most dangerously clever burglars I ever came across was a man largely responsible for one of the biggest coups of modern times, although we were unable to bring it home to him in a legal sense. This fellow made it a practice to get drunk before he carried out an exploit. This was in no sense from lack of courage. I never met a cooler or more self-possessed criminal than this man, when I interviewed him on one occasion. "If you catch me you catch me, Mr. Wensley," he remarked easily; "but not out of my own mouth."

Apart from the ordinary run of burglars and housebreakers are safebreakers. They are clever and audacious men who never work haphazardly. Their plans are invariably very carefully laid. They make it their business to become acquainted with the layout of premises they intend to attack and the habits of everyone connected with

them. Days, weeks, and even months may be spent in perfecting their arrangements. There are among them mechanics of no mean order, men who know a great deal about safes and the most effective ways of opening them in the quickest possible time.

If it is necessary to break into the premises they have selected they usually act from the rear, but they prefer, if it is possible, to have confederates enter the building on some pretext during the daytime, conceal themselves, and let the rest of the gang in when all is quiet. This latter method is much the best from their point of view when it is intended to carry a safe away bodily, to be opened in comparative leisure and security. Those within will then get the safe as near to the door as possible, a motor-car will drive up at a selected moment, and the safe will be transferred to it in an incredibly short space of time. I have known robberies of this sort carried out in a matter of seconds, for these thieves are men with a great knack in handling heavy and cumbrous articles.

Yet a very obvious and simple precaution will baffle these rogues. As I have said, they spare no trouble to ascertain the routine and habits of people connected with premises which they propose to rob. This is because in dealing with heavy or bulky property of value they must feel a reasonable certainty that they will not be disturbed. If there is any likelihood of an interruption they will not take the risk. The job is "off." I throw out the hint to those business firms which do not employ caretakers or watchmen. If some responsible person makes visits at uncertain hours during the time when premises are normally closed, the difficulties of this kind of robbery become so much increased that thieves of this class will let them alone. The cleverest criminals in a broad way are Jews. The cleverest thieves are, in my opinion, undoubtedly born Cockneys. They have a very complete knowledge of the world and a faculty for deceit that it would be hard

to excel. They can act a part with glib plausibility and put on an air of brazen impudence or profound stupidity with equal ease.

The receiver has become a kind of legendary figure in crime. Actually he differs greatly from what he has been pictured. No class of criminal is so constantly exposed to risks from every direction. That is not to say that he is the easiest for a detective to deal with, for rather the reverse is the case.

There is no such thing as an indiscriminate receiver of stolen property on a big scale. Such a man could not avoid detection, for it would be impossible for him to arrange safe channels for the disposal of every class of property. "Kemmy" Grizzard, who was mixed up in the robbery of a £150,000 pearl necklace while in transit from Paris to London, was one of these supposed super-crooks. Actually his dealings were confined to jewels. It was possible for him to deal in this class of stuff with comparative safety because his legitimate trade was that of a merchant in precious gems.

The same principle applies in other cases. A furrier would not be in the least interested in a batch of stolen watches; nor would a dealer who could find a use for stolen cloth have anything to do with a van-load of tea. There are, of course, a very few receivers who will buy anything in small quantities if it is cheap enough. But the ordinary receiver is careful of accepting indiscriminate plunder. That is one of the reasons why the proceeds of a robbery are sometimes split between four or five receivers.

However cautious a receiver may be, he is always within measurable distance of exposure, or at least of arousing suspicion. By the very nature of his business he has to rely on the good faith of those with whom he deals —always as a buyer and sometimes as a seller. The bigger his trade the larger his circle of possible betrayers.

Beyond that is the chance of raising suspicion by offering stolen goods to the public, or even to private buyers, at prices obviously below their real value.

Even the cleverest of receivers cannot hope to escape blackmail. That is a trade risk, for he is vulnerable at all points. Those thieves to whom he is actually useful may be safe for the moment, but what of their associates and relatives? If a thief is sent to prison leaving a wife and children, money for them is often exacted from the receiver as the price of silence.

Why, in these circumstances, it may be asked, does the detective find the receiver the most slippery and elusive of criminals? The answer is simple. Unless he is caught in the possession of stolen goods that can be identified it is difficult to obtain a conviction. The detective has to do three things:

To trace the stolen property and obtain satisfactory evidence of identification.

To prove actual or constructive possession by the receiver.

To prove that the receiver knew that the property was stolen.

Now, however morally certain it may be that stolen goods have been passed to a particular man, it is never easy to get over all these points. The loopholes for the receiver are apparent. Suppose a search has revealed things in a receiver's warehouse that can be proved to have been stolen. The following conversation takes place:

Detective: Where did you get this stuff from?

Receiver (to his wife): Annie, where did I get this stuff from?

Receiver's Wife: Oh, that. You bought that from George Short.

Detective: Who's George Short?

Receiver: Oh, a bloke I know. Can't remember

THE ORIGINAL BIG FOUR OF NEW SCOTLAND YARD. *Left to right:* A. V. Hawkins, F. P. Wensley, F. Carlin, A. Neil. Four of England's greatest detectives. Arthur Neil was the man who captured G. J. Smith, of "brides in the bath" fame, one of the most terrible of modern assassins.

MR. WINSTON CHURCHILL watching the siege of Sidney Street. It began when Russian murderers slaughtered three police officers . . . ended in a pitched battle in a squalid London street, with raging fire adding a final macabre touch.

where he lived. He was selling up and going to America, and I bought the stuff from him. I've got a receipt somewhere.

And with this he produces a receipt, or a bundle of hundreds of papers and says he can't find the receipt. The detective, of course, cannot say definitely that it was never there. He cannot swear that George Short never existed. Invariably, when a case has got as far as this a charge is made, but it is scarcely ever successfully brought home.

Naturally, all obvious marks of ownership are removed as soon as possible, but experienced detectives know that this does not necessarily destroy all chance of identification. Take the case of a load of tea that has been stolen and removed from its original chests. If tea is found corresponding in blend and weight, that fact would be accepted in the absence of any evidence that it came from a different source. Frequently this would be amplified by the discovery of charred pieces of the original chests.

There are receivers who are reputed, in the phrase of the underworld, to be "not exactly crooked but a little bent." In other words, these gentlemen do not make a trade of receiving, but will buy certain things cheap, if they come their way, without asking too many questions. I remember one Jew of this sort who was nicely bitten. To him, one day, there came an acquaintance who, with an air of secrecy, told a story of the acquisition of a quantity of cloth.

"You don't want to know too much about where it came from," he explained. "Come along and I will show you some of it. We'll send the bulk wherever you say. Take it from me, it's up to sample."

Some discussion followed, and eventually a price of three hundred pounds was provisionally agreed upon. The

Jew, however, insisted that he would not pay until the goods were in his possession. The other pointed out that he had to be sure that the buyer really had the money, and suggested a way out of the difficulty.

The Jew went to the bank and drew out the money. This he showed to the other, who slowly counted it and then placed it in an envelope.

"This is quite all right," he said. "Now I'll seal this envelope and give it to you. When the goods are delivered you will hand this over to the people who bring them."

So the arrangement was concluded. But the Jew became a little suspicious when the appointment was not kept. He tore open the envelope and discovered that it contained nothing but sheets of paper that corresponded in bulk with the bank notes. Perhaps only a Jew would have thought of going to the police in a case like this. But he did so, and a prosecution followed. I believe there was a conviction.

These "bent sort of gentlemen" are among the most troublesome that a detective has to deal with. It has been said that we never get hold of the real receivers of very valuable property, and in a limited sense that is true. These people, as I have said, carry on a legitimate business and only once in a while dabble in illicit traffic. They are in a position to negotiate goods running into thousands of pounds through honest channels, and information about their dishonest activities is hard to come by.

It does sometimes happen that a thief makes an unexpected haul of valuables that are too dangerous for a minor receiver to handle. The latter will avoid taking them if he can, but he may find his hand forced by the thief. "If you had other stuff from me you've got to have this," is the line of argument. The only chance the small receiver then has of disposing of them safely is to get in touch with a bigger man who is able to pay ready money

and take what profit he can get—something like a street bookmaker "laying off" with a bigger firm. The final buyer is not likely to take anything from a person who may be loose-tongued. Indeed, it is very seldom that one receiver—except from motives of self-preservation—will give another receiver away. In this respect there is more honour among them than among thieves.

Another type of criminal of whom most people seem to have a distorted idea is the coiner. Personally I have never been able to understand why any person takes to this form of crime. They are liable to long sentences and make next to nothing out of it. They are the most wretched of criminals. I have known scarcely any coiner who was not almost penniless and living under the most squalid conditions.

The maker dare not pass "snide" coin himself but sells them at so much a "load" to "layers-down." He cannot take the risk of ever being found with anything but good money on him. Most often he is up to his neck in debt because he has to finance his emissaries. There are their expenses in getting to the suburbs, the calls they make upon him when they get into trouble and which he dare not ignore. The "layers-down," incidentally, are very frequently people who have no criminal records.

At the best there is very little in the business, and it is inconceivable why people should take such risks for such little profit. A very curious fact is that nearly all coiners plead guilty when they have been caught.

CHAPTER XVI

Women Are Seldom Master Minds

WOMEN are seldom master minds in crime. They may be just as wicked as men, but their opportunities for crime on a big scale are more restricted, and I can recall only one or two who have developed qualities of initiative and leadership. There was N., a handsome and intelligent adventuress, who might have stepped out of the pages of fiction, who was the brains of a gang of forgers and swindlers and made thousands of pounds ere we checked her career a few years ago. Another type was that Mrs. Weiner who ran a bunch of German burglars, of whom I have already told.

Nearly twenty years ago I succeeded in getting a remarkable woman receiver convicted after she had eluded us for years. This was something of a Jekyll and Hyde business, for not even her husband, who had held one position for twenty-four years, nor her children, who had been decently educated and moved in respectable circles, had any notion that she was carrying on traffic with burglars and other thieves. She had taken an active interest in a well known East End mission, and it was something of a shock to her relatives and friends when the truth was revealed.

Women of this kind, however, are exceptions. In most phases of professional crime in which women engage they work in some sort of collaboration with men. They act as decoys for blackmailers and tricksters; in some cases get jobs as servants or as casual help and secure information for burglars and housebreakers; assist forgers and

coiners sometimes; occasionally they may be involved in hotel robberies. I have known of women carrying through small burglaries or housebreakings by themselves.

Generally speaking, most women who adopt crime as individualists become shoplifters. In this direction they are sometimes very audacious and clever. One of the most determined and resourceful thieves of this kind was a girl—she was well under thirty—whom I will call Maggie X, whom I last heard of in 1926 when, with a group of other women, she was sent to prison for a number of systematic raids on West End shops. They wore big expensive fur coats and elastic bags under their skirts, and members of the gang would distract attention while another would shovel in expensive articles and, still covered by her confederates, walk out of the place, hail a taxicab, and so get away. Their depredations involved thousands of pounds' worth of property, from fur coats to diamond rings. Maggie X was a fair, petite little woman, little likely to arouse suspicion, whose gentle manner gave no hint of the termagant she really was when roused. Some years ago—about 1923—she was charged with various thefts, including that of a tray of gold rings set with precious stones from a West End jeweller. There was another woman mixed up in the same business, and they were locked together in the same cell overnight. When they were put up for identification the following morning it was found that they had exchanged clothing during the night. They were ordered to change back into their own clothes. Maggie did so but refused to wear the fur coat she had on when arrested, hid her hair under her hat, and partly shielded her face. I don't remember whether she was then identified, but she was ultimately convicted.

I once went on quite a prolonged excursion—uninvited—with a shoplifter of this type. I was with some colleagues in the Whitechapel Road when I noticed a couple of girls—Esther Y and Matilda Z—board a bus. Both

were known to me, and it seemed worth while to watch them for a little. We spent an interesting afternoon at a number of big stores. Esther, who was the more expert of the two, missed no opportunities of acquisition. She picked up something everywhere on her prolonged journey from Wallis's in Holborn to Whiteley's in Westbourne Grove—although for various reasons we did not know exactly what had been stolen till afterwards. The finish of the excursion was at a little shop kept by a woman receiver in a street off Oxford Street, where I walked after them through an open side door and surprised them while they were discussing the price to be given for sixty-five yards of satin and thirty-five yards of silk—the reader may imagine the skill that was needed to carry this stuff away unobserved, even though women's skirts were more voluminous in those days than they are now. When Esther was searched, all kinds of things were found down the leg of one stocking from jewelry to bank notes. There was something about her attitude when the matron at the police station told me of this discovery which impressed me so that a little later I had a second surprise search made. This revealed a lovely diamond ring which she had somehow managed to keep out of sight during the first search. Matilda Y was a woman who had carried on shoplifting in most countries in Europe, and on one occasion had toured the provinces of England with considerable success, consigning her loot by rail to a receiver in London. She had on a previous occasion, when I arrested her, been described by the judge as "a kind of felonious commercial traveller." She and the others were all sent to terms of penal servitude.

Another class of women criminals are closely allied in their methods to confidence tricksters and swindlers, posing sometimes as people of title for purposes of fraud, and there are, of course, innumerable cases where men are duped in one way or another by attractive women.

Perhaps, from the detective's point of view, the most difficult of the fair sex who adopt crooked ways are those people of some education and standing but few scruples, who in a lower situation in life would be classed as criminals. These are not infrequently responsible for the losses that occur in society circles. Even when particular individuals are suspected it is seldom simple to gain reliable evidence, because few people are willing to tell what they know. The detective gets no real opportunity of investigation. Lady So-and-So "cannot give you any information." If she is pressed, "What about such-and-such a person?" she will remark loftily, as one putting an end to the matter, "Really I cannot tell you," and the means of getting at the truth are limited.

There may be mixed motives for this attitude—indolence, a reluctance to be mixed up in a criminal case, a wish to avoid something of a scandal, or even a determination to shield a culprit. Sometimes there is a great deal of carelessness over jewelry—because it is insured—and a woman may hate to admit that her loss has been due to carelessness.

From the better classes, too, come most of the kleptomaniacs who usually display a wonderful discrimination in not stealing anything from people who are likely to prosecute them.

There are a simplicity and a cupidity in human nature that never change, and the methods of certain frauds are used as successfully to-day as they were hundreds of years ago. The principle never alters. There is the "working man" who has just picked up a "gold" ring which he is willing to sell at some ridiculous price—or the rogue who hints that a fountain pen or a pair of field glasses has been stolen and can therefore be sold much below its value. The three-card trickster whose confederate has obviously marked a card, so suggesting to the dupe that he may bet on a certainty; the philanthropist

who has been entrusted with a fortune to give away; the racing man who knows of a "job" which ensures that a certain horse will win a race—all of these find their victims among people who really believe that they are defrauding someone else. The swindled person thinks that he is getting the better of a child-like simpleton. That is why the confidence trickster so often carries on with impunity. Unless the sum of money involved is large, there are few dupes who venture to make a complaint, for to do so they have to admit that they have acted like rogues or fools—or both.

There are some tricks so obvious that the only wonder is that even the most simple-minded should be deluded by them. Yet there have been rogues who have made quite a good thing out of such a business as "purse bouncing." This is worked by a plausible gentleman who apparently throws one silver coin after another into a cheap purse, closes it, and offers to sell it with its contents—ostensibly perhaps ten shillings or more—for a shilling or so. The purchasers are astounded to find that, when the purse is handed over, the silver has vanished and two or three copper coins have been substituted. Quite as flagrant is the bogus auction swindle. "Gold" watches, flashy jewelry and ornaments are "bought" at preposterous prices by the auctioneer's confederates to impress a "can" who by and by is induced to take part in the bidding and finds himself saddled with a number of things at ten or twenty times their true worth.

Even to this day "ringing the changes" is sometimes practised, for there are still people who do not know how this hoary old fraud is carried out. The essence of the trick is this: A man walks into a shop, buys a packet of cigarettes, and puts down a ten-shilling note, and receives the change. Suddenly he appears to alter his mind and asks if it would be convenient to change a pound instead of the smaller note. Unless the shopkeeper has a nimble

mind he will not realize, until it is too late, that the ten-shilling note and the change for the pound have both been picked up by the customer.

Fire raising as a profession is not really common among criminals, for it is not very easy to avoid suspicion and probable detection and conviction in the long run. No one person can have a series of fires without provoking determined inquiry both by the police and the insurance companies; and gangs of "firebugs," ready to act for different people in setting property ablaze, must inevitably make mistakes, however wary they may be in approaching possible "clients." The majority of incendiary fires are isolated crimes committed by desperate people on the verge of bankruptcy, but there do arise now and again organized cases of systematic arson.

I have had to deal with both sorts. In the early part of 1913 a fire broke out at a building in the Commercial Road occupied by a Jewish tobacconist. As was not unusual in these places, the house was crowded with lodgers —I think there were about sixteen—and although there were some gallant rescues by firemen and police, two young men were burnt to death.

Now, although the fire did not take place till after one in the morning, both the tobacconist and his sixteen-year-old son were fully dressed. As soon as this was reported to me I became suspicious and set inquiries afoot. Soon it developed that the tobacconist had been in financial low water three months before and had used every penny in his banking account to pay the premium on an insurance of his stock for several hundred pounds. Just before the fire he was being strongly pressed by his creditors, and it was discovered that he had then ordered an extraordinary quantity of wax tapers and matches. When in addition to this I learned that he had hinted to one lodger that the only thing that could save him would be

a fire, I waited no longer. I had both the tobacconist and his son arrested for wilful murder. The boy was acquitted, and the man was found guilty of manslaughter and given ten years' penal servitude.

This was an instance of crude single-handed arson, chiefly remarkable for the callous disregard of life shown in carrying it out. On a very different scale were the operations of a group of fire raisers headed by a man called Joseph Engelstein, against whom, some ten years later, I concentrated some of the shrewdest brains in the Criminal Investigation Department. Working with me in this case were Chief Detective Inspector Alfred Collins and Detective Inspector Kirchner of Scotland Yard, Detective Inspector William Smith who was in charge of my old division, and a number of others.

Over a considerable period a number of mysterious fires had broken out in the East End, mainly in premises occupied by Jews of foreign extraction. The insurance companies were not innocent enough to suppose that all these outbreaks were entirely accidental, but they were unable to lay their hands on any shred of proof that would enable them to refuse payment or to initiate a criminal prosecution. I believe that in some cases premiums were raised heavily, but this had little effect in stopping people who were, so to speak, betting on a certainty. The inference that some definite agency was at work could scarcely be resisted.

Thus it came about that I sent, as I have said, picked men to get some line on the real originators of these fires. A hint here and a hint there soon led the search in the direction of two apparently prosperous business men. One of these was Engelstein, who was head of the Cygnet Cabinet Company in Columbia Road, Shoreditch, and lived in a large house at Hackney, which I believe was formerly the residence of Lady Amherst; the other was Julius Brust, who owned the Tudor Cabinet

Company in Brick Lane and lived in comfortable style at Clapton.

These gentlemen, it was said, could arrange fires, or by way of variety fix up bogus burglaries, either for a fixed sum or for a percentage of the amount realized by the insurance. Quiet inquiries were therefore made into their records. Engelstein was found to have had two fires at his business premises and two burglaries at his private house. Brust had contented himself with a couple of fires. A close watch was kept on the pair, but although a great deal of moral proof was accumulated, for the time there was nothing on which we could act.

One May evening, in 1923, passers-by in Columbia Road were startled by an explosion and a burst of flame from premises occupied by Stolerman Brothers, Ltd., a firm of cabinet makers. Three men rushed from the premises—although they were supposed to have been closed an hour before—and disappeared. When the fire brigade arrived, within a few minutes, water was found to have no effect on the flames, which were finally got under control with chemical extinguishers. Under a staircase were found the remains of a mysterious zinc-lined box, three feet long, eighteen inches wide, and eighteen inches deep, and there was a distinct smell of petrol.

An immediate search was begun for Engelstein and Brust, who answered the description of two of the men who had been seen to rush from the blazing building. It was significant that for a while they were not to be found.

Meanwhile our investigations were much facilitated by the assistance of two young men carrying on business in the neighbourhood who had been approached by Engelstein with hints of a method of acquiring "quick money." In a Shoreditch office he discussed with them the ways and means by which they could have a "safe fire." He could not know that these gentlemen, who acted with

considerable tact and public spirit, had agreed to the interview after consulting us.

James Bernard Stolerman, the head of the business, was looked up. He was still suffering from burns about the head and hands, but he had a plausible explanation ready. They had been caused, he said, by an explosion of the geyser in his bathroom. Engelstein, we discovered, had, after the explosion at the factory, taken refuge in the house of a friend near by, where he was attended by a doctor for burns and was later taken to a hospital at Dalston, where he remained for some time.

Within a few weeks we had got all the evidence we needed, and the three were arrested and taken to Leman Street Police Station. Like Stolerman, Engelstein had an explanation of the burns which it was obvious he had received. He was, he said, burning waste shavings when they fell out of a grate, and he thrust them back with his hands. This, according to his story, had occurred on a Sunday. The fire at Stolerman's factory had happened on the previous Friday, and, unfortunately for him, we had already got a statement from the doctor who attended him on that day.

The details of the crime were straightened out. Some three years before Stolerman had been the victim of a fire at the showrooms of his firm. Under various policies he was paid £5,349—about £2,000 less than had been claimed.

Some time before the fire at the factory, the insurance company had intimated that they would not renew the policy when it expired in June. Hence, any planned fire had to take place before that date. On that May evening the three conspirators had gathered in the factory, after it was ostensibly closed, and carried out arrangements for the fire. The zinc-lined box was filled with petrol and a fuse attached to it. Had all gone as they planned they would have been far away in the bosom of their families

when the fire broke out, and with reasonably convincing alibis. Unfortunately for them they did not rely entirely on the petrol-filled box, but sprinkled more of the spirit from a watering can about the vicinity to make perfectly sure that the flames should spread quickly. This was a mistake, for when a match was struck to light the fuse, it ignited the petrol fumes and caused a premature explosion.

The three men were convicted at the Old Bailey, of arson and conspiracy to defraud an insurance company, in September, 1923. Engelstein got six years', Stolerman five years', and Brust four years' penal servitude.

A recognized branch of the criminal profession that has largely died out with the use of motor transport was that of "van dragging"—that is the theft of vans loaded with valuable property. Not so many years ago, however, it was a very serious problem, and the aggregate amount of property stolen in this way ran into many thousands of pounds every year. In certain districts it was a risk to leave a van unattended for even a few seconds, for the chances were that it would disappear with the celerity of a conjuring trick and the empty van be discovered later in some deserted street. But it was seldom that unguarded vans dropped, so to speak, into the lap of thieves in this way, and many ingenious devices were put into practice to draw the car man and the van boy away from their trust.

One of the most successful ruses used to be carried out in this way. A van which for some reason had drawn up in a street would be marked down. From a doorway near by there would emerge a hurried, well dressed, shirt-sleeved, businesslike man with a pen behind his ear.

"I say, driver, I want to get this telegram off at once, and there's no one in the office. Would you slip down to the postoffice with it for me?"

The driver would perhaps be a little reluctant. "Why not," he might ask, "send my boy?"

Then it would appear that the message was of much too important a character to be entrusted to a boy. The sender would give half a crown to make sure that it was dispatched. Half a crown looked big money to a van driver in pre-war days, and quite likely he would be induced to take the message—which, of course, was a fictitious one. As soon as he was out of sight the man would rush to the van again with another telegram in his hand.

"Look here, my lad," he would explain breathlessly to the boy, "I've given the car man the wrong wire. Rush after him with this. I'll look after the van."

The rest was simple. A confederate, dressed as a car man, who had been lurking near by, would jump up and drive the van away, the sender of the telegram would disappear, and the car man and the van boy would be left to make what explanations they chose to their employers.

I remember one case where a car man who had been sent to the docks for a load of tea was persuaded to hand the whole lot over to a group of thieves. As soon as this was reported to us we sought out the men most likely to be concerned in a coup of this kind. We found them in various places before they could get rid of their booty.

In one place we had just stumbled over several sacks of tea—it had been taken out of the chests—when we were startled by shouts from a bedroom window, "Police! Police! There are burglars at the back!"

We were the "burglars" and the man who was so anxious for the police was the person we were looking for. He admitted that he was "minding the tea till a buyer was found."

CHAPTER XVII

No. 59 Grove Street

MELODRAMA may be all very well for the spectator, but it is sometimes very tiring work for those called upon to play a principal part. Until I read of it afterwards I confess I did not know how thrilling the siege of Sidney Street had been. A man who has not had his clothes off and has been able to snatch only a few hours' sleep for several nights and days is not in a mood to appreciate the spectacular. Yet, looking back at it, I am sure the newspapers were right. No novelist would ever have dared to invent such a wildly fantastic episode. It could only have happened in real life.

The opening of the drama took place half an hour before midnight, on Friday, December 16, 1910. The setting was three streets forming, so to speak, three sides of a rectangle. One of these was Houndsditch; another was Cutler Street; the third a little cul-de-sac called Exchange Buildings, which backed onto Houndsditch.

A Houndsditch tradesman became alarmed by mysterious sounds as of sawing and drilling which could be heard through the wall of a back room and called the attention of the constable on the beat to them. Next door there was a jeweller's shop which had been locked up for the night, and the policeman at once became suspicious. He had a look at Exchange Buildings and sent for help. Other officers arrived, and some of them having taken up their places in strategic positions, a Sergeant Bentley went to make a closer investigation of Exchange Buildings.

At only one house was there a light. This was Number 11. Bentley knocked at the door, and when it was partly opened was heard to ask if any work was going on at the back, and if he might have a look round. The person to whom he was speaking assented and retreated into the house. Bentley followed till he stood on the threshold of a gas-lit outer room. As he was apparently taking his bearings two pistol shots suddenly rang out, and he fell mortally hurt.

Then a hand gripping an automatic showed in the doorway and describing a part of a circle swept the street with a shower of bullets. Immediately afterwards, several people armed with automatic pistols dashed into the street firing right and left. They were met by a number of unarmed police officers who had rushed towards the house at the sound of the first shots. Four of these were at once hit. Three of them, dangerously wounded, dropped to the ground. The fourth, Constable Choate, in spite of his wounds, tackled one of the men and held on till someone gave him a final shot in the back and he fell in a dying condition. It was discovered later that he had been hit eight times.

All this happened with lightning rapidity. Five police officers, of whom three were dead or dying, lay on the ground, and the assassins, supporting one of their number who had been accidentally shot, had disappeared before further help could be summoned. Only one man—Mr. Levy, a tobacconist's manager—was known to have seen them while they were making their escape. Attracted by the shots he was running towards Exchange Buildings when at the corner of Cutler Street he came face to face with three men and a woman hastening eastwards. A couple of pistols were levelled at him with the fierce command, "Do not follow." Then they wheeled through an alley leading to Middlesex Street and were gone.

The City of London is supposed to be the richest

EDITH THOMPSON. She superintended the murder of her husband and became the centre of the most sensational British trial of recent years.

STINIE MORRISON. He slashed Leon Beron to death on Clapham Common on a New Year's Eve and was convicted on Wensley's testimony.

square mile in the world, but it happens to take in the small and squalid section of the East End where these events had taken place. Consequently, all the men concerned were City officers, and the investigation became the duty of the City detectives under Detective Superintendent John Stark (now assistant commissioner), Detective Superintendent Ottaway, and Chief Detective Inspector Willis. But the boundary of my division was only a few yards away, and since my staff and I had great local knowledge, as well as much personal acquaintance with cosmopolitan rogues in the East End, they paid us the compliment of asking for our coöperation.

It was the next day that I was drawn into the affair. By that time the City men had made exhaustive preliminary investigations. They discovered plenty to show that there had been a carefully planned scheme by skilled burglars to rob the jeweller's shop. In the early part of December a foreigner calling himself Levi rented 11 Exchange Buildings. A few days later another foreigner giving the name of Gardstein took No. 9. No. 10 was the house immediately behind the jeweller's premises, 118A Houndsditch. This house was not available at the time, but a day or two before the outrage it had become empty. All of these were separated from the Houndsditch buildings by a narrow yard bounded by a high wall.

Until the search after the murders there had been no suspicion of No. 9. Then there was found there a big cylinder of oxygen gas which had been delivered in a packing case from a coster's barrow on the Friday afternoon. A number of scientific safebreaking tools were found in each house. Unquestionably, therefore, the confederates were working from the two places, and it was possible that some from No. 9 had stolen away quietly after the attack on the police. Between No. 10 and No. 9 a hole had been driven, diagonally, in the yard wall through which access could be gained to the back of 118A

Houndsditch. Work had apparently been carried on partly by candlelight, and two bottles in which candles had been stuck bore fingerprints, but these could not be identified with any in the Fingerprint Bureau at Scotland Yard at the time.

The time of the attempt had no doubt been deliberately arranged for the Jewish Sabbath, which starts at sunset on the Friday, when the shops would have been closed and the neighbourhood very quiet. Thus, if all had gone well from the burglars' point of view, they would have had ample time to open the safe and get away before there was any discovery of the coup.

By noon next day another splash of melodrama was added to the story. This episode we learned from a young doctor who had been acting as *locum tenens* for a friend whose surgery was in the Commercial Road. At half-past three in the morning he was roused by a woman's voice through a speaking tube that led from the door to his bedside. Hurriedly dressing he went down. Two young women were waiting for him and in broken English managed to convey that a man, "very bad," was at 59 Grove Street.

That was all that was said. They preceded him along the road, and suddenly one of the women disappeared down a side street. The doctor continued to follow the other till they came to a mean little house in Grove Street, locked and shuttered. Only after repeated knocks were they admitted by someone whom the doctor did not see. By the light of a match they passed through a tiny passage in which clothes were hanging on a string, and up the narrow stairs into a dimly lit bedroom that was in disorder. A fully dressed man, groaning in pain, was lying on the bed. He explained that his name was George Gardstein and that a friend had accidentally shot him in the back. As the doctor leaned over to examine him, the

light became fainter, and the girl went out to put a penny in the slot.

The doctor concluded that the man had been shot through the lung and the stomach and urged—speaking in French—that he should be taken to the London Hospital. Both the man and the girl vehemently resisted this, and after doing what he could, the doctor returned to his surgery with the girl, who was to take back some medicine.

Had we known of this at the time there might have been no siege of Sidney Street. The doctor returned to the house at about eleven in the morning and was admitted by two young men, who professed to know nothing of the wounded man. The doctor went upstairs and found his patient lying dead in a deserted room. By this time the two men had gone, and he could find no one else in the house.

Even at this stage the news did not come to us direct. The doctor reported to the coroner's officers, and it was from him that we first received information of what had happened.

With Detective Inspector (now Superintendent) Thompson, of the City Police, and several members of my own staff, I went to the house in Grove Street. We were let in by the landlady, a fat old Jewess, who couldn't or wouldn't understand our questions. There was no time to waste. If one of the murderers had died in the house, others, for aught we knew, might be still lurking there. Cutting short a confused babble, I applied a rough test. I signed to her to lead the way up the narrow stairs. I guessed that if armed men were awaiting us no power on earth could have got her up. With some reluctance—due as I afterwards discovered to a distaste to go near the dead man—she preceded me. Her bulk amply protected me from any possible bullet, although, maybe, I

might have been crushed to death if she had fallen backwards.

In a drab bedroom, much confused, as if someone had been making a hasty search, was the body of Gardstein, and at a first glance we doubted if he was really dead. Under his pillow was a fully loaded automatic, which had probably been placed there by his confederates before he died, to enable him to make some kind of a fight for it if he was discovered. A dagger and a quantity of ammunition were in various places.

An adjoining bedroom had been entered simultaneously. There an agitated girl was feverishly burning papers, and Detective Sergeant Leeson, springing forward, gripped her arm as she was flinging a number of photographs on the fire.

To all our questions she shook her head with a "Me no understand." She was taken to the police station, and there, through an interpreter, she gave her name as Sara Rosa Trassjohnsky, and from what she told us and from a search of the house, we were able to develop lines of inquiry that led to the ultimate revelation of the whole story.

The details were laboriously pieced together over a long period, but for the sake of clearness I will set down here a relation of some of the events that had happened up to this moment.

Nothing, I should say, that I learned during or after the investigation has ever led me to think that there was any political significance about the affair. The Houndsditch plot was hatched and carried out by a bunch of foreign thieves who happened to find the so-called "Anarchist Club" in Jubilee Street—which was simply a meeting place for foreigners, some of whom, no doubt, held revolutionary opinions—a convenient rendezvous.

The dead murderer, who was known variously as Gardstein, Morountzeff, Morin, and other names, was

a man who had fleld from Russia about twelve months previously. At the Anarchist Club he had become associated with a group of other young desperate foreigners, many of whom were quite unscrupulous and ready to join in any mischief. Gradually there had sprung up an intimacy between nine or ten people, all of whom were, in some sense, dominated by Gardstein.

Among these was a young man named Fritz Svaars, who was being sought by the Russian authorities on a criminal charge and had only been in England about six months. His character is indicated by the fact that he had brought with him a Mauser pistol acquired in Antwerp. Fritz was one of the tenants of the room at 59 Grove Street, the other being a man called Peter Piatkoff or Schtern—who was something of an artist and who achieved some notoriety during the investigation as "Peter the Painter." Fritz's mistress, a girl called Luba Milstein, stayed with them, and they were frequently visited by other members of the gang.

On the afternoon of December 16th some kind of a conference seems to have been held in Fritz's rooms. Those who took part included Gardstein, Fritz, Peter the Painter, and men named Joseph, Zourka Duboff, John Rosen, Jacob Peters (a cousin of Fritz Svaars), Osip Federoff, Max, and Karl Hoffman, as well as two women, Trassjohnsky and Milstein. Several of these had been seen at different times passing in and out of Exchange Buildings, and it was hard to suppose that such a gathering a few hours before the murders was for purely social reasons.

Although Gardstein, who posed as a chemist, had been making experiments with oxygen gas and blow-pipes, very few, if any, of the gang had any experience of safe-breaking. They had, therefore, enlisted the aid of a "mechanic" to help in the technical details of the projected robbery. This was the man called Max. Whatever his

abilities as a burglar he was a novice with firearms, and this, I believe, was the cause of Gardstein's death. While Max was at work on the wall, the others had left a pistol for him on a table. When the alarm came he had snatched up the weapon and, following the others out, joined wildly in the firing, with the result that he hit Gardstein. He managed to get clear away, and there was a story that some of his confederates, enraged by the loss of their leader, sought him that night to take summary vengeance. Max, at any rate, escaped. We heard of him later in Paris, but there was mighty little evidence we could have brought against him.

Grove Street is about a mile from Exchange Buildings. It has always been a mystery to me how that grim little procession, the men supporting their dying comrade, one, or perhaps two, women walking behind, managed to traverse that distance about midnight without attracting more attention than it apparently did. Before the war Whitechapel was intensely alive at that hour.

For some way Fritz carried Gardstein in his arms "like a baby" and it was their intention to put him down in Commercial Road to find his own way to some place of safety, but he begged them, with tears, not to abandon him. So they took him to Grove Street, where he was left in the care of the girls Trassjohnsky and Milstein.

These two, who were apparently much upset, did what they could, and presently determined to fetch a doctor, arranging also that Milstein should then leave to sleep in Trassjohnsky's lodgings in Settle Street, near by. After the doctor's first visit Trassjohnsky gravitated between Grove Street and Settle Street, her final visit to the former being instigated by Milstein, for the purpose of burning the papers which we found her in the act of destroying.

When they had left Gardstein at Grove Street some, at any rate, of the assassins made their way to the lodg-

ings of a man called Hoffman, in Lindley Street. Among them was Joseph carrying a pistol, Fritz with two pistols —one of which he examined with the remark that he wanted to be sure it was fully loaded—and Peter the Painter. There was some conversation, and they dispersed. Almost at that time I had passed the house on my way home. Perhaps it was providential that I did not meet them.

One grim little ceremony took place at Grove Street. The dead man was arranged in a very lifelike position, and a photograph was taken. This portrait was afterwards reproduced on posters, printed in English and Yiddish, offering five hundred pounds reward for information regarding his accomplices.

On the Sunday, Luba Milstein came to Leman Street Police Station, and I handed her over to the City Police. By Monday things were a little clearer. We learned of the meeting that had taken place at Hoffman's lodgings, but, naturally, when we went there our birds had flown. A hot trail took officers to a house in Havering Street, where Peter the Painter had taken refuge, and they missed him by only a few minutes. Like Max, he got away to France, but the authorities felt that the evidence against him was not strong enough to justify an application for extradition.

I may say here that the chief trouble all through the case was not so much to know who had been concerned as to get legal evidence against them. Among the crowd of foreigners from whom we were driven to seek information was the usual number who professed to know a great deal. Their news, when sifted, was proved to be either nothing but pure imagination or exaggeration of unreliable gossip that had grown as it passed from mouth to mouth. This class gave endless work and trouble. Then there were others who might have been helpful—tradespeople and immediate neighbours—but who were afraid

of the likely consequences to themselves if it became known that they had aided us. A third group were those more closely associated with the suspects as friends or acquaintances—usually compatriots who were unwilling to help against their fellow countrymen.

Whatever the varying motives of these people, they could seldom be pinned down and held to a statement. They were liable to trade on their ignorance of the English language. They would either assert that they had not understood a question or that we had misconstrued an answer. As Sir William Nott-Bower, who was at the time the commissioner of the City Police, wrote, there were those who "absolutely refused to give evidence, and when pressed to do so simply denied all the statements they had made."

So true was this that, as events went, if the two leaders who were afterwards besieged at Sidney Street had been captured in different circumstances without arms in their hands, it is probable that they would have been acquitted.

By Thursday, December 22d, three men who we believed to have some connection with the crime had been located. One of these, Zourka Duboff, was found in Galloway Road, Shepherd's Bush, and detained. That evening I, with Detective Inspector Collinson of the City Police and other officers, was waiting in the room of a house in Turner Street for Jacob Peters. Quite unsuspecting, he walked into our arms at half-past eight, and after a few questions through an interpreter, was sent to the police station. Towards midnight I went with Detective Sergeant Richardson to some tenement buildings in Romford Street, where we believed that Federoff, another of the gang, had taken refuge. We passed up the stone steps to his room and as we knocked at the door someone turned off the gas supply to the house, leaving the whole place in darkness. I imagine that it must have been an accident.

Anyhow, nothing untoward followed. We rushed in and seized Federoff, who, in broken English, frankly admitted that he had visited Fritz Svaars and Peter the Painter at Grove Street.

"These men," I told him, "are suspected of having murdered three police officers, and you will have to go to Old Jewry" (the headquarters of the City Police).

"Very well," he said, "I was not there when they did it."

Duboff and Peters were recognized by Mr. Levy, the tobacconist to whom I have already referred, as the men he had seen with Gardstein (whose body he identified) escaping with a woman from Cutler Street on the night of the murders. With Federoff and the girls Trassjohnsky and Milstein they were all charged with being concerned in the crime.

We continued the hunt for others of the gang, but two or three of them, as I have said, scuttled to France. Fritz and Joseph were in close hiding, nor could we trace the whereabouts of the other two men, Rosen and Hoffman. There was also a third girl, Gardstein's sweetheart, whom we were anxious to find. Day and night scores of men ransacked the East End and other places where they were likely to be, but, for a while, without result. All sorts of information, much of it wild, some of it reliable, had to be sifted, and we knew little rest. But many of those who knew or guessed the truth remained silent. They were afraid of what might happen should the rogues, after all, evade us.

Christmas brought us little respite, and a couple of days afterward we hit on the spot which for some time had been Gardstein's headquarters in London. This was a little house in Gold Street, near Stepney Green, where he had taken a room under the name of Morin. He had pretended to be a student of chemistry, which had enabled him without suspicion to amass a quantity of chemi-

cals, in order, no doubt, to conduct various sinister experiments. We found nitric acid, nitro-glycerine, books which dealt with the manufacture of explosives and the cutting and melting of various metals by means of acids and oxygen gas, anarchist literature, a Mauser magazine pistol, a cartridge belt, and hundreds of cartridges. Incidentally, some of his researches had apparently been carried on at a cycle maker's workroom at Islington.

He had been frequently visited by Joseph, who had on occasions stayed in the house. On the morning of December 16th Gardstein had told his landlady that he was going away for a time, and asked that his room should be kept locked. Until our visit no one had associated this "chemical student" with the Houndsditch murders.

There were two obvious reasons why Gardstein had not been taken back to this place after he was shot. One was the distance—it was nearly a mile farther away from Houndsditch than Grove Street; the other was that his friends were at the time practically all living in the neighbourhood of Grove Street.

The story of Sidney Street must form a chapter by itself. It will, perhaps, avoid confusion if I conclude here the story of the remaining investigations into the Houndsditch affair. Considerable numbers of men of both the London forces were employed, and for weeks scarcely a night passed without an alarm of some sort, always resulting in scores of our men being mobilized quietly in some suspected area. We spared no effort, for, quite apart from the natural wish to run down the murderers, it was a disquieting thought that ruthless men armed with weapons of precision were abroad, and there was always looming before us the possibility of another tragedy.

In the beginning of February the hunt led to Well Street, Hackney, and there Rosen *alias* Zelin was picked

up. A few days later news came to us that another of the men we wanted was to be found at some house in Cannon Street Road. At two in the morning a cordon was drawn round a block of streets so quietly that the policeman on the beat carried on his ordinary patrol duties, for a time, unaware that anything extraordinary was afoot. Then began the somewhat nervy—in the circumstances—business of a house-to-house search. A suspect was found asleep in bed and was roughly aroused when a big detective lifted him bodily to his feet. With an overcoat over his nightshirt he was escorted to the police station. He was Karl Hoffman, at whose lodgings in Lindley Street some of the assassins had forgathered after the crime.

That same morning I arrested Gardstein's sweetheart, Nina Vassileva. She was a tall, self-possessed girl, who had been living off and on in the house of some Jewish folk at Buross Street. After the murders she had dyed her flaxen hair black and had announced her intention of going to Paris, but after a walk one evening she returned and declared that she was being watched. Thereafter she kept close to the house, spending her time, according to her landlady, in dealing cards to decide her fortune.

In a shabby back room, partly dressed, with her long dyed hair streaming down her back, she fenced in broken English with the few questions I put. She explained that she was a Russian and made cigarettes and had been to the club in Jubilee Street. She had heard of the murders of the police officers.

"Some of the men who took part in the shooting are said to be members of the club," I said. "Do you know them?"

"Perhaps I do—perhaps I don't," she retorted.

Nor would she admit that she knew any of the men in certain photographs that I showed her. She scornfully denied that she had any pistol ammunition concealed,

nor, in fact, was any found. She was handed over to the City Police, and when her fingerprints were taken they were found to correspond with those on the bottles that had been used as candle holders at Exchange Buildings. She was identified as the woman who had escaped with the murderers.

I have always felt that the English law is administered with a scrupulous fairness amounting to tenderness where foreigners are concerned. Certainly the five men and three women who were charged had no reason for complaint. No attempt was made to produce anything but the strictest legal evidence against them, and that proved little beyond the fact that they were associated with each other and with the murderers. There was only one witness prepared to swear definitely to the identity of the men who escaped from Exchange Buildings. Trassjohnsky—who went mad a little later, and had to be put under restraint—Milstein, Federoff, and Hoffman were discharged at the police court; Peters, Duboff, and Rosen were acquitted at the Old Bailey. Nina Vassileva was convicted and sentenced to two years' hard labour, but on appeal the conviction was quashed on the ground of misdirection by the judge.

I have heard that Jacob Peters held a prominent place in the Russian government shortly after the revolution. I know nothing of what happened subsequently to the other people I have mentioned—Max, Joe Levi, and Peter the Painter. In view of the uncertainty of getting legal evidence against them, I believe no steps were taken to follow them up.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Siege of Sidney Street

ALTHOUGH we had been aware that Fritz Svaars and Joseph, two of the most desperate of the Houndsditch criminals, were lurking in the East End, it was not till Monday, January 2, 1911, that we really came up with them. For weeks they had been hunted from pillar to post, shifting their lodgings again and again. They must have been much troubled by the reluctance of their friends to take the risk of sheltering them for any length of time. So they passed from place to place, always in my division, and with detectives ever at their heels.

Sometime on that Monday, Superintendent Ottaway, of the City Police, sent word to me that promising information had come to hand. I at once went to the Old Jewry where Superintendents Stark and Ottaway told me that they had heard that Fritz and Joseph were in touch with a certain woman and were likely to change their retreat from her rooms that night. I do not think that at that moment they were sure where she lived, but late in the evening both her name and address were ascertained. She was a Russian, Mrs. Betsy Gershon, and she had a room at 100 Sidney Street, a thoroughfare which runs between the Whitechapel Road and the Commercial Road.

This street was in the heart of the East End, quite close to those places where most of the events I have narrated in the preceding chapter took place. It was thickly populated, mainly by Jews and aliens, and practi-

cally every house contained several families. In many respects it was a likely place for the fugitives to hide in, but it must be remembered that our information, although it seemed reliable, might have proved to be merely another of those false or inaccurate reports of which we received so many during the investigation.

With my City colleagues and some of my own staff I went to have a quiet look at the house, a drab three-story building running flush with the pavement. To have made any inquiries among the teeming population of the quarter at that time would probably have led to the suspects becoming aware that we had traced them, without any advantage from our point of view. For we had decided that, if the men were there and it was their intention to leave that night, our most effective course would be to intercept them when they got into the street. So men were left to keep observation, and we waited on events. This, at best, could only be a temporary measure. It would have been impossible to keep watch for long with any degree of secrecy and with a sufficient number of men to overcome armed resistance.

At about midnight Stark, Ottaway, Mulvaney, the superintendent of the H Division, and myself held another consultation. We resolved, so soon as most of the residents in the neighbourhood had gone to bed—Whitechapel kept late hours in those days—to draw a cordon round the house, using all immediately available detectives of both forces—thirty or so—as well as a number of uniformed men. If firing should start, it was very desirable that we should have the streets clear, and, of course, there was no wish to take chances of the men escaping by a sortie as they had at Houndsditch. We hoped, also, that if the men did not emerge from the house, they might surrender when they realized that they were surrounded by an overwhelming force—although, in truth, we did not altogether expect them to do so.

Some few of our people armed themselves with such weapons as they could lay their hands on—old-fashioned bulldog revolvers, shotguns, and Morris-tube rifles borrowed from a miniature range. Personally I did not care to encumber myself with a weapon.

It was a miserably cold night, with gusts of sleet and rain, and the streets were practically deserted when we took up our positions. As time wore on, the prospects of the men attempting to steal out and so running into our hands grew fainter. Right up to this hour, it must be understood, we had only the foggiest notion of who was in the house besides the assassins—if indeed they were there.

So at half-past three we roused a Mr. and Mrs. Fleishman who were living on the ground floor of No. 100. From them we learned that the lodgers in the house included an old man and his wife, another couple with two rooms on the first floor, and Mrs. Gershon, who had the front room on the second floor. They knew nothing of any visitors who might be with Mrs. Gershon.

Here I should make it clear that Mrs. Gershon's room was approached by a narrow stair up which there was room for only one person at a time to pass. There was a right-angled turn at the top, and anyone standing there could have swept the stairs and passage with pistol fire without showing himself. It would have been simply suicide for any stranger to go up, for the staircase could have been held against an army. We determined to know more of the situation.

We persuaded Mrs. Fleishman—whose actions were not liable to arouse suspicion—to go up on the pretext that her husband, who had been ill, had become suddenly worse, and ask Mrs. Gershon to come down.

She knocked at the door of Mrs. Gershon's room. To her surprise, the other woman came from an adjoining apartment which was used as a dressmaker's stockroom.

She was dressed, save for a skirt and shoes, and explained that she had been about to put a penny in an automatic gas meter. However, she came down, but halted at the foot of the stairs with an exclamation when she saw that the street door was open. Mrs. Fleishman reassured her, and then, to prevent argument, she was seized and carried bodily next door where, in a state of evident consternation, she replied to our questions.

Her story was that Joseph, whom she had known for some time, had unexpectedly arrived with a companion, a stranger to her, some hours previously—at about ten or eleven o'clock. As at that time the place had been under close surveillance this was a little difficult to believe. She said that after she had given them a cup of tea they refused to leave, and to ensure that she did not leave the place herself to seek help, had taken away her skirt and boots.

This was enough to show us that there was little hope of taking them by surprise. On an off-chance of luring them down Mrs. Gershon was sent to report that the man downstairs was seriously ill, and to ask one of them to fetch a doctor. She returned to announce that she had had no success and, equipped with a pair of boots and a coat borrowed from Mrs. Fleishman, she was sent to the police station for the time being.

There was now only one thing to do. We had to get all the rest of the occupants out of the house before we took any drastic step. This involved some trouble and risk, for it was not easy to get some of these excitable Jewish folk to leave their beds at dead of night for some reason that they could only vaguely comprehend. In this work we were assisted by Harry Wagner, who was associated with the Jewish Board of Guardians, and who acted as interpreter and assisted us throughout the night without the slightest heed of danger. There was particular difficulty with one old man and his wife, who

screamed with fear, and some degree of force had to be exerted with them.

All hope of getting at the men unawares had now been abandoned. The prolonged absence of Mrs. Gershon alone must have roused their suspicions, and they could scarcely have failed to be aware of the stir in the lower part of the house. More police were sent for, to keep a wider area of streets clear, and we waited for day to break.

On the opposite side of the road was a small archway leading to a yard in which vans and carts were kept. Here some of us sheltered till a bleak dawn, at about half-past seven. Then, after a deliberation, it was determined to notify the surrounded men that their position was hopeless and that armed men were all round the place.

A loud knock at the street door met with no response. Then a few of us went into the roadway and a handful of pebbles was thrown against the upper windows. Nothing happened for an instant. I was stooping to gather more pebbles when suddenly shot after shot rang out in swift succession. That any one of those in the open should have escaped that fusillade fired at a range of less than thirty yards from weapons that could fire two shots a second and with an effective range of more than a thousand yards was marvellous. One officer had a bullet through his hat. Another, Detective Sergeant Leeson, staggered towards me.

"I am shot," he cried.

Detective Sergeant Richardson ran to him and supported him through the archway to the yard at the back, where he was placed against a van.

"Mr. Wensley, I am dying," he said as I bent over him. "They have shot me through the heart. Give my love to my children."

We got him into a back room of one of the adjoining houses. To venture into the street again would have been

almost certain death, but a Mr. Louis Levy volunteered to fetch a doctor by scaling walls and clambering over roofs at the back. He led a doctor back by the same route, and the latter ordered Leeson's immediate removal to hospital. This presented an awkward problem. At the back of the small yard was a tall wall, beyond which was a shed over which an active man might pass to drop into a brewery yard. Both the wall and the shed, however, were commanded from the uppermost windows of 100 Sidney Street, and that we should be able to get a badly wounded man—who was no light weight—across without attracting attention was at least unlikely. But it had to be tried.

A van was placed against the wall and on this a ladder was reared to the roof of the shed. Somewhere we had got hold of a stretcher, and on this Leeson was carried out, and we succeeded in getting him to the roof. Directly we were up bullets began to splash all round us.

"You are taking me into the line of fire again," cried Leeson, as he became aware of the situation.

To help us in our difficulty, with considerable courage and presence of mind he managed somehow to get off the stretcher and roll himself to the other side, where people were waiting to help him down. As the senior officer there, it was my duty to remain till everyone else reached safety. As a result I found myself a solitary target on the wrong side of the roof just at the moment that the assassins were getting the range. The bullets were now coming fast and unpleasantly close. My only chance of safety was the gutter of the shed which was partly shielded by the ridge of the wall. There I lay at full length in an inch or so of sleet and water, stiff and frozen, with even the slightest movement greeted by a shower of bullets. Curiously enough, the obvious way out of my dilemma never occurred to me—to loosen the tiles near me and drop through the roof to the interior of the

shed. So I remained for half an hour—the longest half hour I ever spent. Meanwhile, a rumour that I had been shot steadily gained circulation and was even published in the newspapers.

At last I took advantage of a moment when the attention of the assassins had been diverted, for by this time they were firing at anything that moved within the limits of their sight—even killing a cat that slipped out of a doorway—and dropped back the way I had come. I may add that poor Leeson, who had been shot through the chest, ultimately recovered and is now living in retirement, sound and well.

As the morning wore on it became more and more evident that the weapons of the police were outmatched. Appeal was made to the officer commanding the Scots Guards at the Tower of London, and a detachment of eighteen marksmen with service rifles was sent to our aid. Later, I believe, additional men were sent. Some of these were stationed in the buildings at front and rear of the besieged house, and others lay at each end of the street on boards intended for the display of newspaper posters that had been borrowed from newsagents.

The wisdom of having a large number of police at hand was demonstrated as news of the siege gained ground and thousands of people crowded the adjacent streets, eager to view the happenings. With the powerful weapons that were then being used it was a mercy that none of the spectators was injured by ricochetting bullets.

Sir Edward Henry, the commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, was out of London and Major (later Sir Frederick) Wodehouse, the deputy commissioner, came down between nine and ten to take charge of the operations. Other high administrative officials also arrived, and later in the day Mr. Winston Churchill, the then Home Secretary.

There was a great deal of confusion, and it would

have been utterly impossible for any one man to exercise effective control of the proceedings. For those at the front of the house to communicate with those at the back, for instance, meant a long and intricate detour through houses, back yards, and over walls, and to find any particular person was a long job. We were dealing, too, with an utterly unprecedented situation which could not have been foreseen.

Soldiers and police kept up an unremitting fire which was vigorously returned from the windows of the besieged house. Very early every pane of glass had been shattered, and the broken fragments littered the sidewalks. The men within fired from behind the fluttering curtains, and it was hard to detect their movements. A burst of firing would come first from one floor and then from another. In the house immediately opposite bedding and other household furniture were piled near the windows as some sort of cover for the besiegers. Various devices, including the exhibition of dummies in police uniform, were tried to induce the cornered men to expose themselves, but they never did.

The last act of the drama opened at about one o'clock. A thin whiff of smoke showed at one of the top windows. As it grew in volume its significance was realized. The house was afire. A fresh burst of firing came from the lower windows and was fiercely answered by the besiegers. There were a few minutes of tension, and scores of rifles and pistols were levelled at the street door which at any instant might have been flung open by those within whose only remote chance was now to make a wild, despairing rush. Personally, I have always held, as a probable surmise, that they deliberately set fire to the place intending to create a distraction with a view to an attempt at escape. If so they abandoned the idea.

The smoke grew thicker and fire engines dashed to the edges of the police cordon where, in spite of the pro-

tests of the firemen, they were halted. Spasmodic firing was still coming from the burning house. There could be no point in useless sacrifice of valuable lives. The end, in any event, was close at hand.

As the fire worked downwards shots came at more infrequent intervals from the lower floors. The slackening in the defense was due, as we afterwards learned, to the fact that one of the assassins—Joseph—had been killed by a rifle bullet and that Fritz continued the fight alone.

Towards two o'clock the house was a mass of flames, and it seemed impossible that anyone could remain in it alive. So far as I could observe—and I was fairly close—all attempt at resistance had finished some time before the firemen were allowed to get to work, although there was a statement that shots were fired afterwards. Another rumour that gained currency was that the men had broken through a wall into one of the adjoining houses, but, in fact, there were ample men there to deal with them.

As soon as the fire had been got under control I was foolish enough to follow at the heels of the firemen when they entered the still-smoking building. Luck must have been with me that day, for again I escaped without a scratch when within an ace of death. An immense mass of stone coping suddenly crashed just in front of me, overwhelming some of the firemen. One poor fellow lost his life, and three or four were badly hurt. Apart from Leeson, these were the main casualties throughout the day. One or two people received comparatively trivial injuries and there were several narrow escapes. From that point of view, the proceedings had ended better than they might have done.

In the débris two charred bodies were found. One of them had been shot through the head, and the other had apparently died of suffocation. At the subsequent inquest

a verdict of Justifiable Homicide was returned. So ended the siege of Sidney Street.

I came out of the affair with perhaps greater credit than I had honestly earned, for the conduct of the inquiry into the Houndsditch murders was in the hands of the City detectives, of whom I was only the ally. The difficulties that invariably crop up when detectives of two forces are working together were minimized by harmonious coöperation. Such help as I was able to give was handsomely recognized by the Lord Mayor and aldermen in a generous monetary award, and it was gratifying to me to observe that Sir William Nott-Bower, at that time commissioner of the City Police, in his reminiscences published two or three years ago refers to my "invaluable aid in tracing the criminals."

CHAPTER XIX

The Spider

Few intelligent criminals enjoy the risks involved in their exploits. They rob solely to make money, and they would be much happier if they could get it in any other way. But here and there one comes across men who, even when assured of a comfortable living, continue their depredations—largely, I suppose, because they find some thrill in taking those risks. If I had not met some of these folk I might have some difficulty in appreciating their attitude of mind. The prospect of years in a convict prison is not a pleasant one.

It was in 1908 that reports of several robberies at the premises of two or three provincial jewellers reached us—the biggest being at Cardiff, from which about a thousand pounds' worth of property had been stolen. This was one of those cases where the very cleverness of the method adopted showed that its authors would probably have to be sought among a very small group of experts.

The simplest way of handling a matter of this kind is one of elimination. Having decided who might have done these crimes, it became a question who could have done them. My own view was somewhat in favour of a man who was perhaps the cleverest burglar in England at that time, who was known in his own circle as the "Spider," but whose real name I will not mention.

Inquiries showed that both he and a man whom I will call Blake (his real name was very different) had been absent from their usual haunts in London at the times

that the burglaries took place. Our first business was to get evidence linking them directly with the crime. Working with Detective Inspector Rankin of the Cardiff Police we eventually succeeded in doing this.

Both these men proved to be very elusive, and the problem of locating them baffled us for some little time. They were known to be bold and reckless characters, as well as skilled burglars, and a special notice was sent out from Scotland Yard calling attention to the fact that they invariably carried firearms, which they were prepared to use. This made it all the more necessary to carry out our search for them very quietly, so that we should, if possible, take them by surprise. All points to which they were likely to resort were watched, particularly a large house in the West End, where the Spider's wife lived. Somehow, however, he must have learned that this was under surveillance, for he took particular care not to go near it.

One day, Divisional Detective Inspector Tom Divall and I, with other officers, were searching Shoreditch when we found Blake in a public house in some side street. He put up a short but stiff resistance, but was overpowered before he could do any mischief and taken to the police station.

Shortly afterwards we traced the Spider to a house in Compton Road, Islington, where he had hired a room and was staying with his wife. Early one Sunday morning the place was surrounded and Rankin and myself gleaned from the landlady that the lodgers were in the habit of having an early cup of tea in bed. We did not wish to break this habit, so Rankin and I got into the room—which was on the first floor at the front of the house—simultaneously with the tea. Surprised though the Spider was, the moment he caught sight of us he leapt from his bed and made for the window. Only our quickness prevented him from making a temporary escape for,

though to the ordinary person it would have seemed impossible to reach the ground without injury, the Spider was capable of performing much more desperate feats with ease.

When he realized that he had no chance he accepted the situation philosophically and smiled as I rummaged in a kit bag that I found in the room. Stowed away with his clothes were a file, a chisel, a bunch of skeleton keys, some jeweller's scales, and a box of matches.

"A good workman always carries his own tools," he remarked as I examined these things.

Even more damning was a diamond pendant, found wrapped in one of his shirts, which was part of the loot from Cardiff. I gave evidence against both these men at the Cardiff Quarter Sessions when they were found guilty and each given six years' penal servitude.

Now, the Spider was really a well-to-do man. The money involved in this exploit could have been of little consequence to him, for he had a substantial banking account, his wife had quite a considerable income from some tenement property which she owned, so that they were able to live in good style. He even kept his own carriage in the days before motors were thought of. In ordinary life he was a quiet, affable man, always well dressed and with a passion for music.

Yet his criminal career had begun when he was sent to a reformatory for theft at nine years old. By the time I arrested him he was probably the most skilful burglar in England. He was singularly adapted to most details of that trade. Tools he could handle with the dexterity of a master craftsman, and he was willing to spend both time and money in planning a coup. Nowadays he would be called a "cat" burglar, for he was as clever as a monkey in climbing to apparently inaccessible places, and his favourite method of entry was through a roof. In one case —this happened at Shrewsbury—he broke into one

house, crossed four roofs till he reached that of a jeweller's shop, which was his objective, removed some tiles, dropped into the shop, managed to pass the spoil to a confederate outside, climbed back and was home in London before the robbery was discovered. While he was passing over the tiles his hat blew off. This led to his capture and conviction, and he had not long been released from the term of five years' penal servitude when he fell into my hands.

No physical risks daunted him and more than once in his early days he put up a desperate fight to avoid arrest. On the other hand, while in prison for the Shrewsbury affair, he tackled a demented convict who ran amuck with a chisel, with the greatest determination and coolness.

His specialty was jewel robberies, and he had acquired great knowledge of the value of gems. Seldom did he work with more than one associate, who was usually a person known as "the Squeaker." What had happened to this man at the time I do not recall, but the Spider had enlisted Blake as a likely assistant while they were in prison together. Taking one thing with another, I think I may say that the Spider was the cleverest man of his class with whom I ever had to deal.

Different, and yet similar in one sense, were a couple of rogues who were responsible for a series of sensational art thefts from great country houses, during 1922 and 1923. The total value of the property which they stole in one year was given as in the neighbourhood of sixty thousand pounds, although naturally its intrinsic value was very much less. Here again the risks taken were so totally disproportionate to the money that could be got in a dishonest market as to seem inexplicable by any other theory than getting a "kick" from the hazards involved.

These two men I will call Grey and Green. The latter, at any rate, seems to have had some judgment and taste

in matters of art, however perverted the use to which he turned these faculties. One of the robberies in which they engaged was at Benham Park, Newbury, the residence of Mr. H. C. Sutton, which was full of valuable art treasures. Having found a ladder, Grey broke in through a third-floor window, and Green followed. With some discrimination they selected a couple of Gainsboroughs and two or three other pictures which were cut from their frames, four miniatures, a christening cup, and one or two odds and ends of jewelry which had not been locked up. They were extremely careful not to leave fingerprints and got clean away.

The publicity given to this robbery inspired some ingenious Frenchman to write to Mr. Sutton telling a story of two people who had attempted to sell the Gainsboroughs to his employer and offering to retrieve them if £50 in notes were sent to him at an accommodation address in Paris.

Another valuable picture was taken from Ashford Hall, Ludlow, the seat of England's premier viscount, Lord Hereford, together with a number of silver articles and antiques. Sir John Leigh of Lilles Hall, Newport, also lost a valuable picture, and there was a raid which resulted in the loss of a great number of art treasures from the seat of Lord Jersey, at Middleton Park, Bicester.

Indeed, the operations of the two ranged over the whole country. Lord Glanely, Lord Portsmouth, Lord Berwick, Lord Waring, Lady Constance Russell, Sir George Halford, and dozens of other owners of art treasures suffered. I do not know how many police forces were concerned in one way and another, but this was a striking example of a case where a national detective service, which could have dealt with the investigation as a whole, would have been of effective use. Of course, we at Scotland Yard were notified of the circumstances

of each robbery as it occurred, but we could only pursue general inquiries in case any of the property came to London.

In fact, this did happen, and we caught three men through whose hands some of the stolen stuff had passed. We also managed to gain some notion of the principals engaged in the various robberies, although we did not know where they were. Their run was drawing to a close, however, and after a hue and cry had been raised as the result of some raid, they were arrested by the Scottish police at a railway station while still carrying the valuables they had rifled.

One of them afterwards told me that they would have probably avoided capture had they followed their usual practice of immediately separating after the robbery and making their way from the district by different routes. They knew that search would be made for two men, but I gathered that some distrust had arisen between them, and each was afraid to trust the other with the loot. Thus they had gone to the station together—and naturally railway stations would be among the first places covered by the police after the alarm.

After the Scottish case had been dealt with I sent Detective Inspector Goodwillie to fetch the pair to London, and saw them when they were safely lodged at King's Cross Police Station. They seemed rather proud of themselves and treated their exploits as if they merited praise. To Goodwillie and Detective Inspector Mitchell, who was acting with him, Grey admitted breaking into thirty-six houses—at least, he explained, "that was all he could remember." The list of sufferers read like a page from Burke's *Landed Gentry*.

An interesting statement was written by Green and later produced as evidence. He was a bit of a *poseur*, and some portions of it are worth quoting as disclosing his mentality:

In March, 1923, I, together with Grey, went to Benham House, Bucks . . . and reached there in the neighbourhood of one o'clock. Having reconnoitred the lower part of the house and found egress [*sic*] difficult, Grey climbed a ladder standing against the house near the portico to a third-story window, which he entered. After fifteen to twenty minutes he reappeared by opening some french-windows or doors covered by the portico. I entered with him and then surveyed several reception rooms. I suggested taking the two Gainsboro' pictures and he cut the cords of one, which caused the wire to fuse [electric light was attached to frames] and burnt his knife. . . . He also broke that valuable Stockbridge Cup [this was a silver-gilt racing-trophy] contrary to my wishes. I selected the miniatures. He searched the upper rooms and while he was gone I sat in the hall and was struck by the two panels, also taken. I took these. On leaving, we went to London, and on the following Sunday night I passed the pictures and miniatures over to some one else.

Green apparently took no active part in the robbery at Lord Jersey's house, but was called by Grey, who had a flat in Kensington, to help in getting rid of the stolen articles.

Grey recited to me the "daring burglary" part of it. . . . The recital was better than a sixpenny thriller. I being duly grateful for it, Grey passed me the stuff to dispose of as I could and to hasten the deal to a conclusion; his plea being that he had no money. This plea was general with him—too general—and I began to suspect that it was not altogether truthful. . . . The articles were for the most part *objets d'art* and nearly all of an antique nature. A charming collection

which for once showed Grey's good taste. I can only express regret and sympathy to Lord Jersey for the loss he sustained. . . .

At a later stage in the statement he said:

I loved Lord Jersey's stuff and would like to possess it. I handled that not only by request but by inclination. It was a case for a gentleman.

The story went on:

I also handled the picture stolen from Sir John Leigh's place entitled The Hall of the Circassians. . . . This was handed to me by Grey at his flat. I remarked that it was good of him to take a Passimi, but there was no demand for his paintings like there were for other now defunct Masters. He replied that it was easy to handle! Hence the insurance people paid.

I received a quantity of jewellery from Grey which he told me he had acquired in a legitimate nocturnal marauding from Tankerville Chamberlayne, Esq., M. P., of some house between Winchester and Bournemouth in Hants. . . . Lord Henry Neville's stuff went where all good swag goes or ought to go. What was there I don't altogether remember. I disposed of it "by request." I received it from Grey in Hyde Park, on a dark winter's night. . . .

Green's caution not to betray the receivers was needless, since they were already in our hands. We recovered a considerable amount of the stolen property including the picture, The Hall of the Circassians, which had been ingeniously hidden. It had been placed behind a quite ordinary framed picture and a piece of brown paper pasted at the back.

The trial took place in July, 1923, when Grey was given eight years' and Green six years' penal servitude. Certain associates, including a picture-frame maker, who had been the chief receiver, were given terms of hard labour.

Much more businesslike, if less sensational than the operations of these people, were those of a gang of warehouse breakers who carried out a series of depredations in and about the City of London until we rounded them up in 1920. We captured eight or nine in one swoop, and they were convicted of stealing thousands of pounds' worth of furs and other property by a method that was becoming popular with this class of thief.

They were a highly organized gang. They would take a house in close proximity to the warehouse which they intended to rob, so that all the preliminaries could be carried out without attracting attention. Where a padlock secured an outer door, it would be broken off to allow two or three of them to make their entry, and there they would remain all night packing up the plunder. Meanwhile a padlock of similar pattern would be attached to the door to prevent suspicion being aroused. Between six and seven in the morning a motor would arrive with the rest of the gang, the stuff selected would be bundled into it, and it would be driven off to some prearranged spot on the outskirts of London. In one case it was taken to the shed of a lonely farm and kept there until it was disposed of by sample and sent abroad.

No one could have said that these people had any false notions of the "romance" and "adventure" of a criminal life. They engaged in crime for one thing only—as a means of making money and for no other reason. Yet several of them had quite substantial banking accounts. They were all sent to various terms of imprisonment.

CHAPTER XX

Chief Detective Inspector, C.I.D.

WHEN a man is advanced to chief detective inspector in the C. I. D. it is usual to transfer him to Scotland Yard. The only exception to this rule was made in my own case. When I reached this rank, in 1912, I was retained in the East End and the sphere of my operations extended to neighbouring divisions. I was in a more detached position, and acted, perhaps, with a slightly freer hand than my colleagues at headquarters.

Four and a half years later, on the death of poor Alfred Ward, who was killed by a Zeppelin bomb, I went to Scotland Yard to take up the work of senior chief detective inspector. This brought to a close a continuous service of twenty-six years in the East End.

The war years, although they relieved us of much criminal work, in other directions put a very heavy strain on the C. I. D. organization. For three years I found myself almost constantly engaged in highly confidential work for our armed forces. This was a great change in many ways, and I was frequently brought into close association with many of the great figures of the war. Even now it is out of the question for me to speak of many of the matters on which I was engaged. There were, also, of course, certain offenses due directly or indirectly to war conditions, such as melting down or "sweating" gold coins, and offenses against the Military Service Acts.

About this time I devoted some thought to the changed conditions under which criminals were operating. It was clear that the development of methods of

rapid transit—particularly the motorcar—was bringing about a state of things in which the detective was placed at a great disadvantage. Men might carry out crimes at great distances from their usual haunts and in districts where they were entirely unknown. To deal with them effectively some scheme of closer detective coöperation had to be devised—a scheme which had to be elastic enough to permit of wide and prompt action under disciplined control.

As things had been for many years, the Criminal Investigation Department was composed of a comparatively small group of officers at Scotland Yard, mainly engaged on special duties, and each division had a certain number of men under an inspector. Control over all these was really in the hands of one superintendent at Scotland Yard. All sections of the Department were, of course, supposed to act together when necessity arose, but, naturally, energetic local officers felt it their first duty to suppress and detect crime in their own particular divisions. Combined action in several divisions would be dependent upon the good-will of a number of divisional inspectors, each acting with a certain independence. This defect in the system had not been so vital in the days when the C. I. D. had been smaller, and before criminals had been able to move rapidly from place to place.

It was in 1916 that Sir Basil Thomson, then the assistant commissioner in charge of the C. I. D., asked me if I had anything in mind that would put the detective system in a more fluid state. I pointed out, in skeleton outline, the desirability of appointing superior officers of experience, each of whom should supervise and coördinate the activities of several divisions and be in more or less constant touch with each other. There should also, I suggested, be created a roving body of detectives under officers of special capacity, who could move rapidly and operate in any division where there was an epidemic of

crime. They should be able to deal with it independently or in conjunction with the divisions concerned—whichever appeared most efficacious.

Sir Basil seemed to welcome the idea, but we were at the time too concerned with wartime matters to make any immediate change. Later Sir Basil went over to the Special Branch, and the scheme lapsed. It was revived towards the end of 1919. London was split up into four detective areas. Albert Hawkins and myself were appointed superintendents, and Arthur Neil and Francis Carlin, acting superintendents (later they were confirmed in the rank), and each was given charge of a district. I found myself controlling the detective work of all the divisions east of the City, as well as the E (Bow Street) Division, and the Thames Division. The scheme was a success from the first, and among its developments was the establishment of a Flying Squad, which, in its original form, used two police tenders each working in two of the area superintendents' districts.

The Squad seemed to strike the imagination of the public, and the first of many dramatic episodes when, under Detective Inspector Grosse, a number of officers in a tender chased a gang of shopbreakers and arrested them after a fierce fight in the Buckingham Palace Road, aided its reputation.

I have always regarded this scheme as the first step in a nation-wide detective service, knitted more closely together than now, which must ultimately come if the criminal is to be effectively dealt with. If it was necessary to tighten the organization in London, which has always been under one supreme control, how much more essential is it that there should be great coördination in the provinces where there are scores of practically independent controls. This is no reflection upon provincial detectives, among whom I have known many able and energetic men.

I do not believe that there has been any decrease in our criminal population; if anything, it has increased. Criminals are becoming linked together in a form that years ago was never dreamed of. A crook hailing from Scotland may be found with one from Southampton, working together in Surrey. Of three men arrested for picking pockets at Charing Cross one might come from Leeds, another from Cardiff, and a third from Portsmouth.

The motorcar has facilitated the operations of criminals much more than it has those of the police. It is easy to see the cumulative effects of mobility on the activities of criminals, and the added difficulties of detection, especially when a police district has little concern with crimes that take place outside its own boundaries.

A robbery in the west of England may have been planned in London on the information of some person who knows the district and has a full acquaintance with the habits of the local residents, but who does not necessarily show himself in the neighbourhood. After the theft, circumstances may apparently show that it has been committed by someone with local knowledge, whereas it has actually been committed by persons utterly unknown in the district, who have come and gone hundreds of miles. How are the local police, however efficient, to gain any clue except by accident?

The starting point is really in London. A wide-awake detective hears a casual remark that So-and-so has taken a trip to the west of England. He judges that probably So-and-so has had some "job" in view. On that surmise he might follow the matter up by inquiry among So-and-so's acquaintances and learn when he left London, when he returned, his financial situation before and after the trip, and so on. Thus the affair would probably be cleared up. As things are, however, the London officer may have neither the time nor the inclination to embark on a con-

siderable amount of work on a vague possibility that may lead to nothing, and is in any case—strictly—the business of the local police.

Although there has always been a great deal of poppycock written about the C. I. D., I do not think that any branch has been more misrepresented than the Flying Squad. It has performed an immense public service, and there is perhaps no single body of men who deserve greater credit for what they have done. But it is a mistaken notion that fast cars, wireless, police boxes, or any other mechanical device—valuable and essential as they are—can ever supersede a single detective. Facilities for quick information and instant action are of immense service—as for instance, when a policeman on a beat is able to tell Scotland Yard that he has seen five suspects in a car that he is able to describe, heading in a certain direction, and thus enable Flying Squad patrols to be warned by wireless—but as a rule the capture and conviction of a criminal must depend upon men and not upon things.

The real function of the Flying Squad is very like that of all other detectives—to act upon information. Its value lies in its mobility. It can get anywhere quickly. But to be effective it must have some definite objective. Although its cars patrol the streets night and day the percentage of criminals caught, so to speak, by accident, is ridiculous. The Flying Squad catches thieves because it knows thieves. Suppose the men in a Flying Squad car catch sight of some Lambeth criminal strolling about a well-to-do residential locality, like Hampton Court.

"Hello," says someone, "what's John A doing miles away from his home?"

Then John A is unobtrusively watched, and at the first sign of any overt action is arrested as a suspected criminal.

A detective, not being superhuman, must know some-

thing about a suspect before he can take any effective steps. To make inquiries about people of whom one knows nothing at all is at the best a long job, and usually pretty futile. To send a crowd of men from the Flying Squad, for instance, into a district where there is an epidemic of crime would be worse than useless if they went without any notion of whom they were looking for. The thieves would be quite likely to know the detectives before the detectives knew them, and to transfer themselves to another district.

Some of the Flying Squad methods are really an adaptation of principles that were in use years ago. On one occasion four or five of us borrowed a tradesman's van to follow a gang of suspected shoplifters. While they were at work we would hide the van in a side street, and follow them in and out of various places. In the van we had a selection of hats and coats so that we were able to change our appearance from time to time.

They were extremely astonished when, after their arrest, we were able to recount every small detail of their operations over many hours. I remember their counsel speaking as if we had been guilty of particular meanness in changing our clothes, which provoked from the late Judge Rentoul the question, "What is disguise?" and the story of an Irish priest who was described as "disguised" because he wore a clean collar.

Shadowing, in the sense of one fast car following another secretly for any length of time in the congested London streets, is for practical purposes impossible, except, perhaps, under favourable conditions at night. Open pursuit is quite another matter.

The Flying Squad cannot and has never pretended to perform miracles. However up-to-date its appliances, there is nothing that can take the place of personal contact. It cannot rely upon chance. Take safebreaking, for instance. This offense is nearly always systematically

planned and occurs in some place left unattended after business hours. The operators have by personal study and, perhaps, by cultivating the society of some incautious employee, learned everything they wanted. They act at a time when they know they are not likely to be disturbed. A time-table is arranged, and at a selected moment a signal that all is clear is given, a car is driven up, the safe lifted bodily into it and carried away. Unless there is such clumsiness as to arouse the suspicion of some outside person, or unless a police officer chances to be on the spot at the psychological moment, it is almost impossible for a detective to know anything of the robbery till after it has happened.

Or consider a "smash-and-grab" raid. There are, I think, something over eighty thousand miles of streets in London. Without previous information, what a fluke it would be if a Squad car was in the vicinity! The criminals choose their time, and it is all over in a minute. There is scarcely a hope of catching them in the act. Other methods of running them down must be and are adopted.

Sooner or later the gangs who take part in these raids become known to the Squad. Then it is possible to take steps by which they are invariably broken up. The great thing is to *know* something about the thieves. Then it is that fast cars become useful—indeed, without them it would be almost impossible to deal with these people.

Naturally, all preventive devices help to make the accomplishment of a crime more risky from a criminal's point of view. Plenty of light, electric alarms, even such elementary precautions as strong window fastenings are difficulties that he has to consider. But these things mean little or nothing *after* he has successfully carried through a crime, and it should be remembered that it is then, in the great majority of cases, that a detective is called upon to act.

Into the category of preventive appliances come the

police boxes that are now being erected on many roads. These will have great uses in many directions—particularly as a means of more swiftly circulating information—but no ordinary professional thief with a motor at his command is likely to be trapped by them. There will always be plenty of alternative roads which he can take. If he can, as he usually does, avoid a police officer on patrol, he will with greater facility dodge a permanent police post. The offender against whom these boxes will be most effective will be either an amateur or an accidental criminal—a man, for instance, who has committed some motoring offense.

The fact is that, although the criminal seldom gets away in the long run, the task of catching him is not nearly so easy as people may suppose. I am trying here to show some of the troubles that beset the police, and to make it clear that modern methods of transit have reacted very much more in favour of the breaker of the law than of the detective.

One simple method that may make it easier for the Flying Squad and other detectives to cope with motoring criminals comes to my mind. It should be within the power of any judge or magistrate when sentencing rogues of this type to prohibit them from holding a motor driver's license after their release, except by special permission of the police. The breaking of this condition should be a punishable offense.

At present it may happen that a Flying Squad patrol sees a well known criminal driving a car. Whatever they may suspect, they have no power to interfere with him until an offense has taken place. If the suggestion that I throw out were adopted it would mean that a man could be arrested at sight, exactly as a license holder is, for failing to reside at his registered address. To make it perilous for these people to use cars would very soon stop a large proportion of the crime in which motors are used.

The thing would work almost automatically. A car—possibly stolen—with four or five criminals in it is seen by a police officer. Knowing some of them, he would either stop the car or send a notification that would result in its capture with the occupants sooner or later.

It may be argued with some appearance of plausibility that this scheme would not necessarily prevent a man getting a license in a false name. Sooner or later, however, he would be recognized. There is also, of course, the alternative of using an unconvicted associate as a driver. Other troubles would then confront him. There is not an unlimited supply of rogues who have not been to prison who could be trusted, and the number would grow smaller as they were caught.

This scheme would be restricted to those persons likely to use a car in the commission of crime. It would impose no hardship on the man who really meant to turn over a new leaf and whose livelihood might depend upon driving a car, for he would merely have to persuade the police that he was sincere, and he would be granted a dispensation without any publicity.

CHAPTER XXI

"Blodie Belgium"

ONE of the strongest arguments in favour of a national detective service is that it would simplify team work in criminal investigation. If the team spirit had not existed in the C. I. D. there would have been, I think, much more trouble in getting to the truth of the murder of Madame Emilienne Gerard.

The opening of the case was the discovery, by a road sweeper, of a parcel wrapped in sacking which had been deposited inside the railings of the gardens that form the centre of Regent Square, Bloomsbury. When the parcel was undone there was found in it the trunk of a woman, clad in delicate underclothes of lace and blue ribbon. Head, hands, and legs were missing. A sheet had been wrapped round the body, and on a piece of torn wrapping paper the words "Blodie Belgium" had been roughly scribbled. A search in the vicinity resulted in the discovery of the legs in a paper parcel a little distance away.

This was on November 2, 1917. A medical inspection showed that the woman must have been killed at some time within the previous two days, and the mutilation of the body showed some anatomical skill.

John Ashley, who later succeeded me as Chief Constable, was then the divisional detective inspector of the E Division, and the first stages of the investigation fell automatically to him. The difficulties of the task were accentuated by the fact that it was wartime and London was full of refugees among whom it was probable that

inquiries would have to be made, for the writing suggested that the victim was one of them.

A close examination of the articles brought to light only one possible clue. This was a laundry mark "II H" worked in red cotton on a corner of the sheet. Inquiries were at once set on foot among all the laundries where information was likely to be picked up. By the following day this led to a house in Munster Square, Regent's Park, and there it was learned that a Frenchwoman, Madame Gerard, had been absent from her rooms since a particularly bad air raid on the night of October 31st. She was the wife of a chef, who had been in this country but was then serving in the French army.

Up to this time there had been nothing to indicate the place at which the woman had been murdered. She might have been killed anywhere in London or outside, and it was therefore decided that I, as senior chief detective inspector, should assist the divisional detective inspector in the conduct of the inquiries, so that if they led outside the division I should be able to continue the investigation with a full knowledge of all the details. The divisional detective inspector of such a district as E Division is always busy, and it would have been scarcely fair to expect him to carry on a special case demanding close attention and probably heavy work outside the limits of his district.

I went to Bow Street, where I found that Ashley and his staff had been energetically at work and had accumulated a considerable amount of very valuable information. He was obviously pleased when I told him that I had come to coöperate.

The usual efforts were made to trace the friends and associates of Madame Gerard. Among them was a butcher named Louis Voisin, who lived at a tenement building at 101 Charlotte Street, Fitzroy Square, to whom she had at some time acted as housekeeper. By

Saturday night we had enough material in hand to show us that it was necessary to interview this man and a woman with whom he was living, a Madame Berthe Roche. Officers went to find them, and they were invited to come to Bow Street so that statements might be taken from them.

No charge was then made against them. Theoretically they were in the same position as a number of other foreigners who had also been asked to come to the police station in connection with the case. We had no legal proof against anyone. The only link was that of the sheet, traced as belonging to Madame Gerard. That did not necessarily mean that the headless body was hers. It might have been that of some other person. Even if it was that of Madame Gerard, all that could have been shown was that she and Voisin were on intimate terms, which was far from proving that he had murdered her. Common sense, however, pointed to the probability that whether he murdered her or not he knew something.

I think that something had developed in a vague sort of way, because high voices of women had been heard coming from his rooms during the midnight hours. This might have been worthless gossip, or it might have had some association with the agitation induced by the air raid. But it was a point that in some degree brought in Berthe Roche. It was our plain duty to clear up these things. I had an open mind, but the position was a delicate one. If my recollection is right I was asked at the trial (I think by Lord Darling) what I should have done if Voisin had asked to go. I replied that I did not know, but that if he had I hoped I should have risen to the occasion. However, I added, I was glad that the question had not arisen.

There were some twenty or thirty people waiting at Bow Street at the time, whom it was necessary for me to see on various points of the investigation. Since, however,

we regarded Madame Roche and Voisin as the people most likely to throw light on the mystery, we interviewed them first.

Voisin was a short, thick-set man, heavy jawed and exceedingly powerful of frame, and he faced me with a sort of aggressive determination. He spoke broken English of a kind, but to make sure that we thoroughly understood each other I had with me Detective Sergeant Read (now a divisional detective inspector), who spoke French fluently and who helped at various points. In this way Voisin related a story that must have been carefully thought out.

His line was a profession of ignorance. He had known Madame Gerard for eighteen months or so, and she had for some while acted as his housekeeper, going between her rooms and his. All through their acquaintanceship he had been on the most friendly terms with her. On October 31st he met her with a friend, "Marguerite," a young French girl with whom she was going to France that day, on a visit to her husband. She had asked him to go to her rooms for letters and to feed the cat during her absence, and he had done so on two days since her departure.

All this was very plausible on the face of it. Voisin was cunning. He knew—he had the best of reasons for knowing—that we had not yet proved the body to be that of Madame Gerard, and that it was not likely to be a simple job to prove that she had *not* gone to the war area and disappeared. I may add, however, that at a later date we managed to trace "Marguerite" and had her brought back from France, whither she was prepared to swear she had gone alone.

Voisin rather gratuitously referred to some butchering operations and to taking home a calf's head. This, it became obvious at a later stage, was to forestall inquiries

as to the cause of a number of bloodstains that were found in his kitchen.

There was much to do that day, and the interview was broken off. The man and the woman were detained, and that night and the next morning I carefully considered the position. There was one test that might be applied to Voisin which would either go far to clear him or to show that he had a guilty knowledge of the crime. Could I justify myself in applying it? I foresaw complications and realized that I must take the responsibility on my own shoulders if it should be said that I had overstepped my duty. I had no hesitation in my decision.

When, on the Sunday, I again saw Voisin, after a little conversation I turned to the interpreter.

"Ask him," I said, "if he has any objection to writing the words 'Bloody Belgium'?"

"Not at all," returned Voisin, and a sheet of paper and a pencil were handed to him.

Laboriously—he was an illiterate man—he traced the words.

The writing was much smaller than that which had been found with the body, but there was a general resemblance, and the spelling was the same—"Blodie Belgium." But I wanted to be sure that there was no mistake.

"Perhaps you're not feeling quite yourself," I said. "Would you like to try again?"

Five times he wrote, each time using the same spelling, but the handwriting varied in size. The final copy bore a very close resemblance in every particular to that of the original. I knew then that it was only a question of time before the other points in the case would be cleared up.

Among the objects found on Voisin, when he had been searched, was a key that opened the door of a cellar at 101 Charlotte Street. Alfred Collins, then a detective sergeant and now a chief detective inspector, who had

worked with great keenness and ability on many phases of the investigation, was one of the officers entrusted with the search of the premises. He was not a man likely to overlook anything, and in going over the cellar, he came across a cask of sawdust in which were hidden the head and hands of the murdered woman. Not only was there now incontestable evidence of her identity, but something of the manner of her death was made plain. She had been struck about the head and face several times with a blunt weapon, and there were bruises on her right hand that indicated how she had attempted to shield herself. Bloodstains were all about Voisin's kitchen, particularly on the inside of the door, which was removed and later produced at the Old Bailey. These marks were all of human blood, so that they could not be accounted for by the explanation that Voisin had given.

When I told Voisin and Roche that they would be charged with the murder of Emilienne Gerard the woman was thunderstruck. She jumped to the conclusion that her lover had betrayed her, and broke into a storm of voluble and abusive French. "You nasty man! You have deceived me," she raged at him.

He merely shrugged his shoulders with a muttered, "It is unfortunate," as they were taken away.

Sir Bernard Spilsbury, the well known pathologist, was called in, and his report made it apparent that Madame Gerard must have struggled hard for her life. A bloody towel had one of the dead woman's earrings attached to it, and it was a fair inference that someone had held this round her head to stifle her screams. After she had fallen unconscious she had slowly bled to death. We also found some bloodstains at Madame Gerard's rooms, but Sir Bernard was positive that they must have been much more extensive had the woman died there. How those stains were probably caused I shall explain.

Bit by bit we filled in the gaps until we gained a fairly

coherent idea of the whole grim and dramatic episode, although some of the details were a matter of inference.

The terms on which Madame Gerard had been with Voisin were something more than those of a visiting housekeeper. She had unquestionably been his mistress, and whether she knew that he was living with Berthe Roche or not, she had certainly never met the other woman. I am inclined to think that she did not know of her existence.

The night of October 31st was marked by one of the worst air raids London had known. Sometime after eleven o'clock a warning was given, and Emilienne Gerard left her rooms and, in common with hundreds of others, sought the safety of one of the Tube stations. For some reason she did not remain there. I rather fancy that at the "all clear" signal the station was closed and the crowd of refugees turned out. There was always the possibility of a fresh relay of raiders and the panic-stricken woman was seized with the idea of spending the night in the refuge of her lover's room in the basement of 101 Charlotte Street, a little distance away. Thither she went, and there she found Berthe Roche, who also disliked air raids, sitting with strained nerves in a lighted room. I imagine that Voisin himself, who was of a more phlegmatic temperament, had gone to bed.

Conceive the situation as the two half-hysterical Frenchwomen unexpectedly confronted each other, with their lover asleep in one of the other rooms. There would be demands for explanations, protests, threats. And then suddenly the excitable Berthe Roche, seizing the first weapon that came to hand, springing like a wild cat at her rival. Voisin, aroused by the quarrel, rushes in, and perhaps seizes Madame Gerard, smothering her screams in a towel, while the other woman continues to rain blows on her. Finally, as the struggle went on, he himself made short work of her.

Whether the murder was carried out exactly in this way or not, it was in the highest degree probable that Berthe Roche must have struck the numerous early blows, for they had been dealt by a person of no great physical strength, and a man of Voisin's power and trade would have dealt with the victim with more deadly sureness at the outset.

During the rest of that terrible night, the pair must have sat up debating the means that they should take to conceal the crime and avert suspicion. Voisin's skill as a butcher suggested the dismemberment, and he must have also been charged with the disposal of the body. They must have been in some perplexity as to what should be done with the head and hands, and a clumsy expedient seems to have been determined upon.

On the afternoon of November 1st Voisin called at Madame Gerard's rooms—of which he had a key—and explained to the landlord that his tenant would be away for a week or two. She had asked Voisin (so his story went) to mention to the landlord that she was expecting a sack of potatoes and would he be good enough to put them in her rooms when they arrived. It may have been at this visit that Voisin made the bloody marks that were found at the place, and took away the sheet in which the headless body was to be wrapped. The idea was to create an impression that Madame Gerard had been killed at her own place by some person who had visited her there, and had carried away some parts of the body, although how Voisin could have failed to see that, if the head and hands were sent there disguised as a sack of potatoes, the landlord would have inevitably recalled enough of the conversation to betray him, it is difficult to understand. The writing "Blodie Belgium" was also intended to mystify us and lead to a false scent.

A day or two afterwards Voisin attempted to adapt this story to some of the discoveries he must have known

we had made. With some chivalry he tried to exonerate definitely Madame Roche without committing himself. "She is not concerned in this crime at all," he asserted. He added:

"I went to Madame Gerard's place last Thursday, at 11 A. M., and when I arrived the door was closed but not locked. The floor and carpet were full of blood. The head and hands were wrapped up in a flannel jacket which is at my place now. They were on the kitchen table. That is all I can say. The rest of the body was not there.

"I was so astonished at such an affair I did not know what to do. I go to Madame Gerard's every day. I remained five minutes stupefied. I did not know what to do. I thought that a trap had been laid for me. I commenced to clean up the blood, and my clothes became stained with it. . . .

"I then went back to my house, had lunch, and later returned to Madame Gerard's rooms and took the packet to my place. I kept thinking this was a trap.

"I had no intention to do any harm to Madame Gerard. Why should I kill her? I didn't want any money. Madame Gerard owes me nothing, and I owe her nothing." (He did, in fact, owe her £50.) "I cannot see why I should do such a thing as that to Madame Gerard. I wanted to see Monsieur Gerard because I knew Madame Gerard was being mixed up with bad associates and had taken people to her flat. I knew that she had taken somebody there that night, and there are letters to show that she had been meeting men."

This statement was so naïve in its intention to mislead us that it could be dismissed as the futile concoction of a confused if cunning mind. That any reasonable person would believe that Voisin should carry away the head and hands from Madame Gerard's rooms to his own was out of the question. The other damning links in the chain against him were his association with the woman, the

human bloodstains found at his premises, the skill with which the body had been cut up, the resemblance of his writing and spelling of "Blodie Belgium" to the same words on the scrap of paper found on the body. These points he left unexplained.

Sir Richard Muir, who became leading counsel, went into the case with his usual thoroughness, tramping from one place to another to get a complete grasp of every detail. He never spared himself.

When Voisin and Berthe Roche were committed for trial the man made a further attempt to shield her. "Madame Roche is entirely innocent," he declared. "All that was found was taken from Madame Gerard's to my home."

At the trial, as I had expected, there was some legal argument as to whether the circumstances in which "Blodie Belgium" had been written by Voisin were such that the evidence was admissible. Mr. Justice Darling held that it was.

After quoting various legal authorities he said:

"He could see no reason for thinking that the statement was involuntary. It was quite proper for the police to ascertain who was the person who wrote 'Blodie Belgium.' It would be greatly in favour of Voisin if his handwriting did not resemble the writing on the paper. What was done was not setting a trap for a man—it was a legitimate attempt to assist the police."

The point, in fact, formed one of the principal grounds of appeal, and in equally strong language the judges there held that I had been right. The decision may be of interest to police officers who read this book, and for that reason I quote some portions of it. Mr. Justice A. T. Lawrence said:

> The question whether the prisoner had been duly cautioned before the making of the statement was

one of the circumstances which must be taken into consideration, and one on which the judge must exercise his discretion. It could not be said as a matter of law that the absence of a caution made the statement inadmissible. It might tend to show that the person was not on his guard as to the importance of what he was saying or as to its bearing on some charge of which he had not been informed. Voisin had written the words quite voluntarily. The mere fact that there were police officers present, or that the words were written at their request, or that Voisin was being charged at Bow Street Police Station did not make the writing inadmissible. There was nothing in the nature of a "trap" or of the "manufacture" of evidence. The identity of the dead woman had not been established, and the police, although they were detaining the appellant in custody for inquiries, had not decided to charge him with the crime.

It was desirable in the interests of the community that investigations into crimes should not be cramped, and the Court was of opinion that they would be most unduly cramped if it were held that a writing voluntarily made in the circumstances proved in this case was inadmissible in evidence. The mere fact that a statement was made in answer to a question put by a police officer was not in itself sufficient to make it inadmissible in law. It might be and often was, a ground for a judge to exclude the evidence, but he should do so only if he thought the statement was not voluntary in the sense which he (Mr. Justice Lawrence) had mentioned, or was an unguarded answer made in circumstances which rendered it untrustworthy, or made its admission against the prisoner unfair.

The evidence against Berthe Roche was less direct in a legal sense than that against Voisin, and on the second

day of the trial she was, by direction of the judge, acquitted of murder. On an indictment as accessory after the fact she was subsequently found guilty and sentenced to seven years' penal servitude. She went mad in prison, and about a year after she had been sentenced died in an institution at Highgate.

Voisin was found guilty, and heard the sentence of death—which Lord Darling passed in French—with a composure that had marked his attitude all through the trial. He was executed on March 2, 1918.

The murder of Emilienne Gerard was among those affairs which might well have ranked as an unsolved mystery had less swift determination been shown in dealing with it at the outset. That Voisin would have found some means of getting rid of the head and hands, as well as the incriminating bloodstains at his rooms, had the investigation lagged, is in the highest degree probable, and there would have been remote chance of a conviction without that evidence. As it was, the body was discovered on a Friday. Thanks to Ashley's activities its likely identity had been established by Saturday. On that day Voisin and Roche were detained and by Monday the case against them was practically established.

CHAPTER XXII

Senior Chief Detective Inspector, C.I.D.

DIRECTLY and indirectly, I was one of those people whose lives were much affected by the war. It brought great changes to me both personally and professionally. At its outbreak I was a chief detective inspector whose duties were mainly set on the eastern side of London and limited to the investigation of crime as it is normally understood.

With the war, the whole of the Criminal Investigation Department found its work become much wider and in a way more complex. This was peculiarly the case in the districts with which I was particularly associated, where there was such a large cosmopolitan population. If I had believed everything I heard in those days I should have had half the foreigners I met—whether Germans or not—put under arrest as spies. The few real enemy agents who were in my area were soon located and handed over to the proper authorities, for interrogation and trial. The Defense of the Realm Act and other wartime measures entailed a great amount of activity on members of the C. I. D. As the war went on, large numbers of the criminal classes were drawn into the fighting services, but, on the other hand, there sprang up a variety of new offenses peculiar to the time. One of these was the melting down of gold and silver coins in which the metal was worth much more than the face value. Another, after the Military Service Act had been passed, was to resort to means to evade service in the army. There were many

men willing to pay heavily for this, and there were cases in which I was able to break up organized conspiracies.

To my wife and myself the war brought unforgettable if proud tragedy, for it cost us our two sons. Frederick Martin, the elder, was a student at Culham College when war broke out. He was then twenty years old, and those qualified to judge prophesied for him a brilliant career in whatever profession he decided to adopt. But he saw his duty with clear eyes. Although already a member of a Territorial battalion he was anxious for early service in France and used every effort to that end. This was denied him for a while. By March, 1915, he had been gazetted a second lieutenant in the Lincolnshire Regiment, and a few months later, while attending a bombing class, was wounded fifteen times by an accidental explosion. This could not quench his eager spirit, and he was urging the doctors to pass him as fit before he was completely recovered. So he went to France, without illusion as to what war meant, but with a gay and steady courage. He was killed on August 5, 1915.

This was the story as we had it from the captain of his company:

> My company had gone up into the front line, but your son was not with me, as he had been chosen to go with Major Kendrick and a party of sixty in a bombing raid on the left of our line. The party never went over the top, as the bombardment was too heavy, and it was in this bombardment that your son was killed while standing in the trenches. He was hit by a shell and killed immediately. I was more sorry than I can say that we have lost him, as he was the most valuable officer I had in my company, and has been of the utmost help to me. . . .

There were other letters which I value, and from which I may be forgiven for quoting some few extracts.

All the officers and men [wrote the Chaplain], speak very highly of Mr. Wensley. He was a brave boy and one of Britain's best.

The colonel of the battalion to which he had been attached in England said:

Believe me, your dear son is mourned by many comrades in this battalion. Although we have had nearly three hundred officers, there were few whom I knew so well or thought so highly of.

Another officer wrote:

As you may have heard, he was closely associated with me in his duties, and he was one of the best subalterns I ever had and, moreover, became a very loyal and warm personal friend. I cannot speak too highly of his qualities.

"The sacrifice," I wrote at the time, "is great; the cause is greater." Nor could we stand in the way of our other son, Harold William, who was then seventeen and was anxious to prepare himself to serve in the same regiment—and, if possible, adopt the army as a profession. He was a boy of great intellectual attainments, and the stiff examination for Sandhurst had no terrors for him. He passed into that great military college as a prize cadet. Within a year he was gazetted to the Lincolnshire Regiment and went to the front. On the day that the Armistice was signed he was seized with influenza, and four days later he died.

There was one letter he wrote:

If from the other side were knowledge of this life, it would be painful to see his virtues paraded after death.

But I cannot avoid an estimate of him that was given by an old schoolfellow at St. Olave's School:

> "G. T."—Good-Tempered—had for some reason become a nickname for him, and with him it meant no mere easiness of manner or character. . . . We remember how first he came to Stogs: a little awkward in acquaintanceship, for he was always from his nature straight-tongued and at times astoundingly brusque. He was then, as ever, the most conscientious worker in his class. Shall we ever forget his pages of neatly tabulated notes or the ready fund of quotations that he memorized from the poets?—for in literature he found his chief delight, and developed no mean ability both in criticism and in original work. . . . Sport found in him an enthusiastic votary. . . . He was a staunch friend and something more than a pleasant companion; always unselfish, but imbued with a keen sense of justice and honour. His own character was so fundamentally strong, and life meant so much to him, that he was scarcely tolerant of weakness in others, or of frivolity with regard to "the things that matter." If one impression is left deeper in the writer's memory than any other, it is that of Wensley's fierce denunciation of anything that was mean and unmanly. Yet our "G. T." was a constant source of fun, with his explosions of humorous merriment.

These were the boys whom I showed how to live, and who showed me how to die.

My old friend and colleague, Alfred Ward, was killed by a Zeppelin bomb in October, 1916, and I became automatically the senior chief detective inspector of the Criminal Investigation Department. Up to that time, although amenable to the authorities at Scotland Yard, I

had been, so to speak, in a peculiarly detached position, and had enjoyed a wide latitude in handling criminal investigations of which I had special knowledge and experience. I had a successful record behind me. For instance, quite apart from ordinary crime, in the years that had elapsed since I first took control of a detective division, I had not left a single case of murder unsolved within my jurisdiction.

If practice had been followed, I should have been transferred to the Yard when I originally became a chief detective inspector, four and a half years before. There were reasons why that exceptional course should not continue. As senior chief detective inspector certain responsibilities were likely to devolve on me that could not be properly exercised except at Scotland Yard itself. The question was, whether I should be likely to do as well in a different sphere in which the work itself would be in some ways different, and perhaps carried out in different conditions.

On the other hand, I was not specially ambitious; the work I was doing was work I knew from A to Z and which I thoroughly enjoyed. I might, perhaps, in effect if not in name, have relinquished my seniority and stayed where I was. After much thought I decided to go. I know that there were people who considered me foolish.

In a sense the Yard itself was as strange to me as the service itself had been on the day I entered it. Curiously enough, there was no one there with whom I had been really associated in any serious investigation now that Ward, whose place I took, had gone. There was only one superintendent of the Central Branch—John McCarthy—and my immediate colleagues in the chief inspectors' room were Fowler, Gough, Hawkins, and Carlin—all very able men.

Although so many criminals were away, there was plenty of interesting work to occupy us. Of course, the

conditions were abnormal, but one rather odd fact struck me. In spite of the fact that each of the five chief inspectors was a picked man, with service going back well over a quarter of a century, no one of us had a definite staff, nor, generally speaking, any permanent sequence of responsibility. There was no system of delegation, and practically all matters had to filter through the superintendent. If a chief inspector wanted assistance he could draw on the general body of available officers, but those he selected came only temporarily under his control. This, I felt, was bad from many points of view, and later I was instrumental in getting it altered by giving each chief inspector a squad or wing of men who looked to him for their day-to-day instructions. Interchangeability was preserved by a system of transfer as occasion arose. This gave the chief inspectors a greater interest in all that was taking place, a better knowledge of individuals, and promoted a keen and healthy rivalry between the various groups. I am, however, getting a little ahead of my story.

The days were strenuous but, as I had never believed in taking off my coat and putting on my slippers at six o'clock, they suited me. A large part of the war-work was under the genial Hawkins, but no inconsiderable share of it came to me. Indeed, for nearly three years most of my time was taken up with affairs in connection with the war, although there were excursions into purely criminal matters, as in the case of Voisin, which I have told elsewhere in these memoirs.

The years immediately succeeding the war were no less busy. Twice in 1919 I was sent into the provinces to assist the local police in murder investigations. One of these was the case of Nellie Rault, a member of the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps, who was stabbed to death near a camp in Bedfordshire; the other was in connection with the murder of Mrs. Ridgley, a shopkeeper of Hitchin, Hertfordshire, who was found dead in her shop, her dog,

also dead, lying near, and a bloodstained four-pound weight close by. In the sense that no one was ever convicted for these crimes, I suppose that the investigations must be put down as failures. I have no wish to make it appear that I was one of those supermen who never failed. But in both these cases the difficulties were magnified by the time that was permitted to elapse before the help of Scotland Yard was enlisted. Nellie Rault had been killed six weeks before I was sent down, and the murder of Mrs. Ridgley had taken place a fortnight before. In the latter case the theory—unaccountable to me—had originally been formed that the woman had died as the result of an accidental fall. A man was arrested for the murder of Mrs. Ridgley and acquitted after trial at the Hertfordshire Assizes.

Even after the war the shortage of gold made it profitable to melt down gold coins, and there were many people, who in the ordinary way would not be classed as criminals, engaged in this sort of thing. One raid that we brought off in the East End resulted in the discovery of a sort of melting-down factory in a back kitchen. There we found a furnace in full blast, a number of crucibles full of coins, thirteen silver ingots, and a gold ingot weighing fifty-nine pounds—worth about £5,600. The successful issue to which we brought this case was largely due to Divisional Detective Inspector Wright.

In another case, the later Divisional Detective Inspector Yeo, Detective Inspector (now Superintendent) Cooper, and other officers who were acting with me, did some brilliant detective work that resulted in unmasking an extensive conspiracy for dealing in gold coin. Among those involved were a barrister, a money-lender, and a jeweller.

We were originally a little puzzled about this case, because it did not appear at first sight that any criminal offense could be proved. Large numbers of notes were

being exchanged for gold by a certain man, but there was nothing illegal in that. It might have been just the act of a wealthy crank who preferred to hoard his money in this fashion, and I am inclined to think that this is what it was at the outset. A well known inquiry agency, conducted by a former Scotland Yard man, was asked to look into the affair and came to the conclusion that the gold was being dealt with illegally on a pretty extensive scale.

What had happened was that a gentleman of doubtful antecedents had learned that the crank was getting this gold and drew him into a scheme that appeared to be fairly safe, as well as profitable, and as time went on other people were drawn into the plot. It was necessary for us to show that they were dealing improperly in gold coin. Positive proof was, by the nature of the offense, far from easy to obtain, and although by this time we had suspicion of several people, it was necessary to act with great caution until we were reasonably sure of our ground, for they adopted many safeguards to protect themselves.

Finally, one of the suspects was shadowed from an hotel in Southampton Row to one of the Holborn side streets. There he was met by a woman who passed him a heavy handbag. This bag was taken back by the man to his hotel, and presently it appeared again—this time in possession of another man accompanied by a woman. They took a taxi and drove to a narrow alley leading to Lincoln's Inn Fields. From there they walked to the chambers occupied by the barrister. After a while another man was admitted. Detectives followed and surprised the barrister as he was handing over a number of notes in exchange for the bag, which was found to contain several paper parcels in which were gold coins to a total amount of seventeen hundred pounds. On another man caught in the place there were fifteen hundred sovereigns. All of this pointed to the fact that they were trafficking

in the coins, and they were arrested. A little later other people in the conspiracy were traced and ultimately seven of them were charged and convicted.

An odd dilemma that momentarily embarrassed us was the story that Lord Kitchener's body had been found. This was blazoned far and wide, and a coffin was brought to London and placed in the back of an undertaker's shop, which was fitted as a private chapel. No criminal offense had been committed, but it was felt that there was an indecency in the proceedings and that the thing should be put a stop to. But had we any right to intervene? On thinking the matter out the solution flashed across my mind. Those responsible for the affair asserted that the coffin contained a body. "Very well," I said. "Where is the doctor's certificate showing the cause of death?" Of course, there was no certificate. "Then," said I, "this body must be removed to the mortuary to await a coroner's inquest." This exploded the whole silly story at once, for it enabled the coffin to be opened and examined. There was no body there!

This reminds me of another incident which had a touch of grim humour. A certain undertaker was reputed to be in the habit of receiving stolen goods. One or two officers went to his place to make inquiries. He received them quite affably, and although they had no warrant, cordially invited them to look round his premises. Among other things they noticed a coffin that had been screwed down, and with a newly inscribed name plate affixed. They would have had grave hesitation in examining this in any circumstances, but, in fact, the idea did not enter their minds. The coffin, as we learned when the undertaker was brought to book at a later stage, had been full of stolen property.

After the close of the war some time elapsed before what could be called normal conditions, so far as Scotland Yard was concerned, were restored. There were the

industrial troubles and a general restlessness that had its reaction on crime. This manifested itself in many ways. There were men whose mental balance had been disturbed by shell shock or other war causes. Among the large number of boys and men who had become temporary officers were those who were unwilling to revert to their normal stations in civil life and took to the quest of "easy money." Many old criminals returned. Of the flood of men who were released from the services there was a proportion who, for one reason or another, fell into crime. This was really the beginning of the motorcar era for both criminals and police.

I had foreseen, as I have related in another chapter, that the machinery of the C. I. D. would have to be adapted to meet the changed conditions under which criminals would operate when the war was over. The problem and its solution had long been in my mind. Since I first gave my ideas to Sir Basil Thomson, in 1916, I had discussed the matter from various angles with all sorts of officers in the department. Thus, when the question was revived, I was able to formulate suggestions on which I may safely say the new order of things was based.

CHAPTER XXIII

The Machinery of Crime Detection

I TOOK over the Central Branch of the Criminal Investigation Department when Superintendent Thomas retired, on November 30, 1921. Thus I seemed to have reached the top of the tree in the service, for it did not then enter my mind that I should ultimately be the first detective of modern times to be given the rank of chief constable.

From one point of view this change was one that I did not altogether welcome. My tastes had never lain in the direction of an office chair, and a considerable amount of routine work was naturally associated with my new post. On the other hand, there were wider responsibilities, and I was in touch with practically everything that happened. I could not complain that my life lacked interest and variety, and I still retained the control of a large part of my old area, so that there were times when I felt justified in taking an active part in an investigation. I must confess to that weakness that never left me, even when I became chief constable, for seeing and doing things for myself.

We were then on the crest of the post-war wave of crime, and problems both special and general were arising every day. Among these were rather more than the usual number of murder cases. To those by Jacoby, Armstrong, Bywaters, and Mrs. Thompson, I refer elsewhere. Sir Henry Wilson was shot by Sinn Fein assassins in June. The murderers were captured, after a chase, by uniformed officers, but the facts leading up to the killing

of so distinguished a soldier had to be closely investigated, and Chief Detective Inspector (now Superintendent) Brown and other officers of both the Central and Special branches acted under my supervision in clearing up the affair. There was the case of Ronald True, who murdered and robbed a woman in her West End lodgings. Within twelve hours of the murder True, who was known to carry a revolver, was traced to a music hall where he was arrested. The outcry that arose when he was reprieved will be remembered, but he was unquestionably a lunatic.

I have served under every assistant commissioner of the Criminal Investigation Department—for Sir Howard Vincent, who took charge when it was created, had a different title. Sir Robert Anderson, Sir Edward Henry, Sir Melville Macnaghten, Sir Basil Thompson, Sir Trevor Bigham, Sir Wyndham Childs were all men with whom it was a privilege to serve.

When I assumed charge of the Central Office, Mr. (now Sir) Trevor Bigham was in control. We had not worked together long, however, when I learned that he was to take up other duties, and Major General Sir Wyndham Childs became his successor.

As I have said, in addition to my office work there were occasions when I took an active interest in investigations of special difficulty and importance. There were times when I was able to intervene with effect.

In May, 1922, a man named Grimshaw was found lying dead in Higham's Park, a lonely part of Epping Forest. That he had been killed by violent blows on the head with some blunt instrument was evident, but there was apparently nothing to connect any particular person with the crime. A theory that was put forward was that the victim had been one of those "Peeping Toms" who sometimes infest quiet places and attempt to blackmail young couples, and that this had led to an attack on him

by some angry man. This was plausible, and there were some little bits of evidence that seemed to lend colour to it. A man had been seen peering cautiously about the place; someone had seen, at about the time that Grimshaw had probably been killed, a young man, accompanied by a girl, walk away from the spot where the body was afterwards found. It was one of those cases in which a slapdash theory might have been adopted by an unwary detective and an inquiry conducted on lines that to some extent would have supported it. The truth was that this was a planned and deliberate murder, and the circumstances that seemed at first to point in the opposite direction really helped to show it. For the man who had been seen slinking through the forest was the murderer and not the dead man.

Luckily, the divisional detective inspector, "Tommy" Tanner, was a level-headed and energetic officer who agreed with me, when we discussed the affair, that nothing should be taken for granted. Certain statements had already been taken when I got there, and, following my invariable practice, I went over the ground to check the topographical features. If this had not been done a great deal of confusion would have arisen at a later stage. One witness had named points from which it was obvious, when they were inspected, he could not have seen what he described. The actual places that he meant proved to be located quite differently, and one spot had been mixed up with another. All this was simple to understand when the places were seen. The incident was a striking example of the value of my practice, for even the best of maps may get quickly out of date, the most honest of witnesses may make a mistake, and the most careful officer may misconstrue a description.

The usual inquiries about the dead man's associates were pressed. In this way we learned that a certain twenty-two-year-old girl had been seen at times in his

company. She was found to have been "keeping company" with a young fellow named Yeldham, but nothing had been seen of either of them since the discovery of the body. Here was something that might be significant —although it might have been nothing but a coincidence —and it was necessary at all events that these two should be promptly traced. The only clue that we could work on was that the girl had either friends or relatives somewhere near Braintree, in Essex.

Tanner and I immediately went down there and discovered that the two had been married at a registry office three days after the murder. I scarcely credit the man with cunning enough to suppose that this might have had the legal effect of closing her mouth, since a wife cannot be compelled to testify against her husband, or with chivalry enough to have married her under the impression that, as her husband, he could take the blame under the doctrine of coercion for any criminal act in which she had been concerned with him. Anyway, the points did not arise, and in any case it is doubtful if they would have applied, since they were married after the crime.

There was a little uncertainty about their movements after the ceremony, but ultimately we learned that they had been seen in the vicinity of a gipsy camp. With the help of officers of the Essex Constabulary, they were located. The man—he was only twenty-three—was a fine, well-set-up physical specimen, but one of those callous and indifferent types who are so often associated with violent crimes. The girl was passably good-looking, but with nothing that put her out of the ordinary run of her class.

They broke down, when they were arrested, and admitted the killing of Grimshaw. The story of the man was that he had followed Grimshaw and the girl into the forest, and when he had seen the other man sitting with his arm round the girl's waist he had given way to an

access of jealous passion and attacked him with a spanner.

What had happened, in fact, was that Grimshaw's infatuation for the girl had been used as the basis of a plot to rob and murder him. Grimshaw was known to carry usually a number of notes on him, and it may have been that the sum was exaggerated. When he met the girl on the day of his death, Yeldham was lurking in the forest with a heavy spanner in his pocket, watching for an opportunity to make his attack. After Grimshaw had been killed, they went through his pockets, took all the money he had with him—fifteen pounds—and absconded.

Both of them were convicted. The death sentence was carried out in the case of the man, but the girl was reprieved.

I do not know whether Tanner was connected in any way with the detective of the same name who did so much to build up Scotland Yard's reputation in its earlier days, but if there is anything in heredity I should not be surprised to find that he was. Certainly he was one of the best detectives I ever knew. Within a comparatively short time after his promotion to divisional detective inspector of the J Division—which is a forty-square-mile wedge of London extending from Bethnal Green to beyond Loughton—he was called upon to handle at least six murder cases, all of which were successfully cleared up. I have always felt a suspicion that the enormous amount of work he put into these and other cases may have been in some degree responsible for his early death.

Another of his cases, in which I had some share, occurs to me as an instance where a murderer's cunning overreached itself. A girl had been found drowned in a river at Epping Forest. On the towpath was found a letter which had apparently been dropped by someone after she had been thrust into the water. From this it appeared that she had gone there to keep an appointment with

some man, and the natural inference was that this person was responsible for her death.

The probable motive of the crime was disclosed by a medical examination that showed the girl would have become a mother. This directed the search to men with whom she had possibly been on friendly terms, and one was found from whom a statement was taken. He spoke in an apparently frank and convincing way of his acquaintanceship with the girl, and it seemed impossible that he could have written the letter. For the moment his story was accepted.

One bitter, snowy Sunday evening in January, 1922, I went over to help Tanner look into the business. The letter seemed to me to come much too pat in helping out this fellow's story, and I carefully checked the time when it was found, the time when she was last seen alive, the last time she had been seen with him, the people who had been seen on the towpath, and other details. The conclusion I came to was that he was the only person who could have placed the letter where it was found. It was, I should say, in a disguised handwriting. I saw the man and pointed out that there were discrepancies in his statement which I should like cleared up. In attempting to explain them he became involved in a tangle of lies and finally admitted that he had written the letter. Following this up, a not uncommon story was revealed—a story of passion, of an unscrupulous man, and a girl who he felt had become a nuisance and decided to remove. He was convicted and hanged.

CHAPTER XXIV

Thompson-Bywaters

I WAS in my office at Scotland Yard on Wednesday, October 4, 1922, when the telephone rang. The voice at the other end was that of Francis Hall, the divisional detective inspector of the K Division, who remarked that he had on hand what looked like a nasty case of murder.

Then he told how a young married couple—Mr. and Mrs. Thompson—apparently on good terms with each other, had been returning home from a theatre at some time after midnight, and while passing through a darkened side street the man had staggered, collapsed, and died. A minute or two afterwards the woman, sobbing and hysterical, appealed to some passers-by for help. They fetched a doctor—by a coincidence a man who himself later met a tragic death—who at once saw that the man was dead. Blood was coming from his mouth, and it was assumed that he had had some kind of seizure. At any rate, nothing could be done, and without any detailed examination the body was removed to the mortuary, and a police officer saw the distracted woman home. Some time later another police officer, in removing the clothes of the dead man, discovered that he had been stabbed several times and that he must have been killed by a fearful knife wound at the back of the neck.

This at once put a serious complexion on the business. Officers, Hall went on, had gone to Mrs. Thompson, who, still very agitated, was unable to give any very coherent explanation. All that she could say was that while

they were walking along her husband had seemed suddenly overcome and that she had supported him for a little while until he collapsed against a wall. She could not account for the wounds, but it was noticed that her face and clothes were slightly stained with blood. This would, of course, be natural if, as she said, she had assisted him. Hall added that he had himself seen the woman, but she was very much distressed and he was unable to elicit any more connected story from her. She had been asked to go to Ilford Police Station with him so that she might be at hand in case of any developments, and was there at that moment. A close search had been made for a weapon, without effect.

It was a dismal, pouring wet day when I set out for Ilford to assist Hall in his investigations. The murder had taken place within the district of Arthur Neil—then my fellow superintendent—but he was away on leave, and I was temporarily in charge of his area as well as my own. As my car whirled through the driving rain I thought out the vague material on which we had to act, and I did not feel too optimistic. No real suspicion of Mrs. Thompson crossed my mind.

As soon as I had had a word with Hall I saw her. There was no doubt that her distress was genuine. She could scarcely have been called a pretty woman, but she had a distinctly attractive personality. She carried herself well, was dressed tastefully—she still wore the evening gown in which she had gone to the theatre—and spoke with an air of culture. In moments of animation she must have been a woman of considerable fascination. Even seeing her as I did at this original interview, when she was under great stress of mind, she impressed me as being normally a woman above the average in intelligence.

At this time, I should make it clear, she was not under any restraint. Indeed, there was no reason why she should be. We had no idea that she had anything to do

with the murder. She had been asked to go to the police station with a relative because it was convenient to have her at hand while we were looking for something that would give us a line. Every available officer was put on a variety of inquiries as to the circumstances of the crime and the dead man's associates. As little bits of material that might throw light on the crime trickled in it might have been useful to ask her about some point involving fresh inquiries without loss of time. Also there was the fact that we had only a vague and disjointed account of her husband's death to which it was possible she might add when she regained something of her normal balance.

I managed to get her to explain in fair detail what had happened up to the moment just prior to the murder. There we stuck. She was either unable or unwilling to go further.

What I did learn was that her husband, Percy Thompson, was a shipping clerk, thirty-two years old, and that she herself was twenty-eight. They had been married seven years and lived in a little house at Kensington Gardens, Ilford. She had continued in business after their marriage, and was manageress and bookkeeper to a firm of wholesale milliners, and between them they were making enough for a very comfortable living. The previous evening she and her husband had accompanied an uncle and aunt of hers to see a play at the Criterion Theatre. After the show they separated, and the Thompsons caught a train for Ilford. It was while they were walking home from the station that the murder happened.

For some hours, while we were straining every nerve to pick up some tangible line of inquiry, the matter remained thus. Whether deliberately or not, we were led to suppose that this crime had been committed by a total stranger, although it was difficult to conceive why any person should kill another without any motive, unless he was mad. Of course, it was not many years after the war,

and during that time there had been a few cases of people doing extraordinarily motiveless things.

Again and again Mrs. Thompson had been urged to search her memory and tell us of any person who might conceivably have had any reason or fancied reason to kill her husband. We questioned also some of her relatives, but their replies had given us little of value in the investigation.

The reader will understand how all this groping in the dark had led to hours of delay since the murder had taken place. We asked, of course, whether Thompson had any close relatives. So I was brought into touch with a brother. As I talked with him the situation took a sudden and dramatic change.

"What sort of a fellow was your brother?" was one of the questions that I asked.

He answered quite frankly, but in referring to the dead man's domestic life referred in a guarded way to a young fellow named Bywaters who, he remarked, had at some time lodged with the Thompsons and who had been very friendly with the woman. "I never could understand how he tolerated the situation," was the effect of what he said. At the same time he made it clear that he did not think Bywaters had anything to do with the crime, for he believed him to be then away at sea.

From this I gathered that the domestic life of the couple had not run as smoothly as might have been suggested—a fact of which hitherto we had not gleaned the slightest hint. To the neighbours and the outside world there had been nothing to show that they were not leading a happy and contented life.

If it had not been for that hint, it is very probable that the murder might have remained a mystery to this day. We followed the matter up with Mrs. Thompson and a relative who was with her. Who, I asked, was Bywaters? It appeared that he was a youth who had known Mrs.

Thompson since childhood, a ship's writer, often away on voyages but then on leave and due to rejoin his ship on the following day. Then I naturally wanted to know the last time that they had seen him. There was some fencing on this point, but I pressed the question, and at last elicited the fact that on the night of the murder he had visited her sister, at the house of her parents at Manor Park, and had left at about eleven o'clock.

Now from Manor Park it would have been comparatively easy for him to get to Ilford, a mile or two away. On the other hand, it would have been very difficult, if not impossible, at that hour to make the long cross-country journey to his mother's house at Upper Norwood, where he was staying, by the ordinary rail or bus routes. The significance of this struck me.

So far as Mrs. Thompson was concerned all this was a growing suspicion. Why had she from the first so sedulously avoided all reference to this man? Why had she been so reluctant to speak about him, even when directly asked? At last some hint of a motive was apparent.

Everything was still very vague, but my course was obvious. Somehow or other, Bywaters had to be found without delay. True, he might know nothing about the murder; on the other hand, he might know a great deal. We determined that Mrs. Thompson should be held at the police station until we had probed the matter further. This was a simple matter of precaution, for even now the suspicion that she had a guilty knowledge of the murder was slight.

The case was one of those which were a striking demonstration of the value of detective superintendents with broad powers in dealing with a complicated criminal problem. I was in a position to see that instant action took place over a wide area without requests and explanations having to go through dozens of different chan-

nels. Every place where Bywaters was likely to be or to go was covered. I used the Flying Squad and the local C. I. D. staffs pretty freely. In fact, had he eluded us for twenty-four hours, he might have got away to sea, and it is pretty safe to assume that the damning evidence which we ultimately managed to secure would have been destroyed and there would have been nothing to connect any person with the crime. Perhaps by this time he would have married Mrs. Thompson, and they would have been living in the odour of respectability in some neat little suburban villa.

At about six o'clock that evening Bywaters was seen by some of our people who had been sent to keep observation at the house of Mrs. Thompson's parents at Manor Park and was invited to come with them to Ilford Police Station.

I was waiting with Hall in the C. I. D. office, and as he entered and hung up his overcoat, I noticed that there were small spots on the sleeves. I at once sent for the divisional surgeon to decide whether they were blood or not.

He applied the simplest test that I have ever seen, and one which I afterwards recommended to our officers at Scotland Yard as a swift, if rough-and-ready, means of detecting bloodstains when scientific help was not immediately available. Tearing the edging from an evening newspaper he dipped it in water and applied it to one of the smallest spots. The blood was drawn up, I suppose by capillary attraction, till it had tinged the paper. While the examination was in progress I talked with Bywaters.

He was a stalwart, handsome young fellow of twenty, but both in appearance and in manner he was much older. His attitude, as he greeted us, was full of self-assurance, and there was a kind of studied arrogance in his tone.

"What do you want with me?" he demanded sharply.

In his ordinary life I should imagine him to have been rather a conceited and dictatorial young man, and I cannot say that the defiant air with which he confronted me impressed me very much in his favour. I was a man old enough to be his father, a chief of police seeking for information about a cowardly murder, and no ordinary person would have resented my inquiries. I put it to him mildly that my one object in seeing him was to see if he could assist us in getting at the truth.

When the doctor reported that the spots on the coat sleeves were bloodstains—though whether human blood or not he could not, of course, then say—Bywaters was told that we should keep the overcoat and that he would be detained.

"Why," he declared indignantly, "I know nothing about it."

As he started to say something more Hall interposed with a warning that he need say nothing, but if he wished to, it would be better to have it in writing. Bywaters assented.

Now, it was never my habit to let a person rush into a headlong and perhaps incoherent and irrelevant statement without first giving him a chance to consider what he wished to say without any feeling of constraint. Before, therefore, anything was actually written down, I discussed with Bywaters the broad lines of the story he proposed to tell, so that the necessary and material facts could be put together in more or less consecutive order. I wanted his version of his association with Mrs. Thompson and any light he could give on his own actions or those of any other person who might be concerned. This went along in the usual free-and-easy manner. There was no pressure. Now and again it was, of course, necessary to put a question to clear up some obscurity. At some of these interrogations Bywaters showed a little resentment, but I pointed out that if he wished to assist justice he

would tell me all he could, and that by doing so he would put me under a personal obligation. In fact, he rather cleverly told us just as much as he felt that we were certain to find out in any event.

The effect of his statement was this: Both he and Mrs. Thompson had always been exceedingly good friends, and during the summer of the year before he had stayed with her and her husband for about six weeks, at first as a guest, but afterwards as a paying boarder. One day he interfered in a quarrel between husband and wife, and the former asked him to leave. After staying with his mother for a while, he went for a voyage as a ship's writer, and on his return called on the Thompsons. The man received him "a little coldly," but they parted as friends. Since then he had not visited them, but had met them once or twice at the house of Mrs. Thompson's parents. The last time he had seen Thompson was at that place, the previous June. He had, however, met Mrs. Thompson, unknown to her husband, on several occasions since, and had lunched with her on the day before the murder. For a long time he had known that she was leading an unhappy life. Twice he had written to her, beginning the letters "Dear Edie," and signing himself "Freddie." She had written to him two or three times signing herself "Peidi," but he had destroyed her letters. On the day of the murder he had left home just before midday and spent the afternoon alone in the West End. At seven in the evening he had called at the house of Mrs. Thompson's parents and stayed there till after eleven. He managed to catch a train to Victoria, but missed the last train from there to Gipsy Hill, so he walked to his home, which he reached at about three o'clock.

I asked him why, in view of the good terms on which he had been with Mrs. Thompson, he had not hastened to communicate with her immediately on hearing of the

murder. He said that, later in the day, he had accompanied his mother to the City, and leaving her during the afternoon caught a train to East Ham at about five. Then it was that he had bought an evening paper and learned for the first time of the death of Mr. Thompson. He had arrived at the house of Mrs. Thompson's parents at about six and had been immediately brought to the police station. Asked if he carried a knife, he answered that he had never had one.

Meanwhile, a group of Flying Squad men under my instructions had gone to the house at Norwood where Bywaters was staying with his mother. There was no one at home, and they waited on events. Later in the evening —I fancy it was after eleven o'clock—Frank Page, the inspector in charge, telephoned to me that Bywaters's mother had come home. The case had then reached such a stage that I felt justified in telling him to search the place and bring away anything that seemed to have a material bearing on the investigation.

Page asked the mother to take them to Bywaters's bedroom, and there in a suitcase they found half a dozen letters from Mrs. Thompson, all of them couched in passionate terms that left no doubt of their relationship. When these came into my hands I did not expect to find in them anything beyond the endearments usual between lovers. But as I read them I could not fail to remark a sinister undercurrent in some passages. Here are some extracts:

> Yes, darlint you are jealous of *him*—but I want you to be—he has the right by law to all that you have the right to by nature and love—yes darlint be jealous, so much so that you will do something desperate . . .
>
> I tried so hard to find a way out of tonight darlingest but he was suspicious and still is—I suppose we must make a study of this deceit for some time longer.

I hate it. I hate every lie I have to tell to see you—because lies seem such small mean things to attain such an object as ours. We ought to be able to use great big things for great big love like ours. I'd love to be able to say "I'm going to see my lover to-night." If I did he would prevent me—there would be scenes and he would come to 168 [her place of business was 168 Aldersgate Street] and interfere and I couldn't bear that—I could be beaten all over at home and still be defiant, but at 168 it's different. . . .

Don't forget what we talked in the Tea Room. I'll still risk and try if you will—we have only 3¾ years left, darlingest.

This was the stage at which the matter stood towards midnight, nearly twenty-four hours after the murder had taken place.

The cloud of suspicion was growing stronger, but inquiries were still being pushed, and before taking any extreme step I determined to see what the morning brought forth. A bed was made up for Bywaters in the library, and Mrs. Thompson, I think, slept in the matron's room. No charge had as yet been made against them. So far our day's work had shown:

That Mrs. Thompson and Bywaters were clandestine lovers.

That Bywaters and her husband had quarrelled.

That there were slight passages in her letters on which a sinister construction might be put.

That Bywaters's account of his whereabouts at the time of the crime depended only upon his own word.

On the other hand, all this was far from proving murder. There was not a shred of positive evidence that Bywaters had been on the spot at the time of the crime.

Not until the afternoon of the following day was Mrs.

Thompson again asked if she could give any further information about her husband's assailant. She was then more composed and, when shown the letters that had been found, admitted that she and Bywaters had corresponded on affectionate terms. Beyond that she added nothing to what he had already told us. There was not a word about seeing him on the day of the murder. We knew by then, however, that they had taken tea together at a confectioner's shop opposite her place of business at five o'clock on that evening.

At this point there occurred one of the most dramatic interludes of the whole case. Neither she nor Bywaters knew that the other was detained. The C. I. D. office at Ilford, in which she had been interviewed, adjoins the main police station, and passage between them is through a yard which she had to pass on her way back to the matron's room. The way back led by the library where Bywaters was waiting, and through the window she caught a glimpse of him. In an instant her nerve had deserted her.

"Oh, God! Oh, God, what can I do?" she moaned. "Why did he do it? I did not want him to do it. . . . I must tell the truth."

A fit of hysteria shook her, and Hall interposed a quick warning. "You realize what you are saying, Mrs. Thompson? It may be used in evidence."

She was brought back to the C. I. D. office, and as she talked another vital link in the chain of evidence was forged. This is what she said:

"When we got near Endsleigh Gardens a man rushed out from the Gardens and knocked me away and pushed me away from my husband. I was dazed for a moment. When I recovered I saw my husband scuffling with a man. The man whom I knew as Freddie Bywaters was running away. He was wearing a blue overcoat and a gray hat. I knew it was him, although I did not see his face."

A little later Bywaters was told that they would both be charged with murder.

"Why her?" he exclaimed aggressively. "Mrs. Thompson was not aware of my movements."

Then he told how he had waited for the two to return from the theatre, had pushed Mrs. Thompson aside, and told the man that he must separate from his wife. There was a refusal, followed by a fight in which he used a knife and Thompson "got the worst of it." Mrs. Thompson stood by "spellbound."

"The reason I fought with Thompson," went on Bywaters, "was because he never acted like a man to his wife. He always seemed several degrees lower than a snake. I loved her, and I could not go on seeing her lead that life. I did not intend to kill him. I only meant to injure him. I gave him the opportunity of standing up to me as a man, but he wouldn't."

After both prisoners had been charged and remanded at the police court, our inquiries still went on. They brought about the discovery of a large number of letters written by Mrs. Thompson to Bywaters, most of which were found in his "ditty box" on board ship. Why he preserved them I have never been able to understand. It is almost certain that he would have destroyed them after the murder had he been permitted to get back to his ship. They played a great part in hanging Mrs. Thompson.

Extracts from dozens of these letters were read during the trial to show that the project of murdering the husband had long been in the mind of the pair—indeed a literal interpretation of some passages suggested that previous abortive attempts had been made. I quote a few significant points:

> . . . I'm not going to try any more till you come back. I made up my mind about this last Thursday.

He was telling his mother, etc., the circumstances of my "Sunday morning escapade" and he puts great stress on the fact of the tea tasting bitter "as if something had been put in it," he says. Now I think whatever else I try it in again will still taste bitter—he will recognize it and be more suspicious still, and if the quantity is still not successful it will injure any chance I may have of trying when you come home. Do you understand? . . . I'm going to try the glass again occasionally—when it is safe. I've got an electric light globe this time.

I used the "light bulb" three times, but the third time he found a piece—so I have given it up till you come home.

I was buoyed up with the hope of the "light bulb" and I used a lot—big pieces too—not powdered—and it has no effect.

All I could think about last night was that compact we made—it seems so horrible to-day.

"It must be remembered that digitalin is a cumulative poison, and that the same dose, harmless if taken once, yet frequently repeated becomes deadly"—Darlingest Boy—The above passage I have just come across in a book I am reading. Is it any use? . . .

I had the wrong porridge to-day, but I don't suppose it will matter, I don't seem to care much either way.

Will you be ready with every little detail when I see you—because you know more about this thing than I, and I am relying on you for all plans and instructions —only just the act I am not . . .

There were other passages running on the same lines, but these grim hints were buried in a mass of vivacious personal gossip and endearments. Sometimes she enclosed newspaper cuttings on subjects that had interested

her. Even in some of these a sinister purpose might be read. There was one referring to the poisoning of the members of a curate's family by hyoscine, another headed "Poisoned Chocolates for University Chief," a third that spoke of a woman being poisoned by cyanide of potassium.

The body of the murdered man had been buried in Ilford Cemetery by the time that these letters came to light, and we had the body exhumed one moonlight night for examination by Sir Bernard Spilsbury. No trace of poison was discovered.

Few trials with which I have been associated aroused greater public interest, and, according to the newspapers, large sums were offered for their places to persons who had secured seats in the public galleries.

There was really no defense so far as Bywaters was concerned, although the best of his case was made by Mr. Cecil Whiteley, K. C. The line taken by Sir Henry Curtis Bennett, K. C., for Mrs. Thompson, was that her letters had no real intention behind them—that she was a romantic personality living in a world of make-believe, eager to make sure of retaining her lover by a pretense that she was trying to murder her husband. Other passages in the letters were explained by a pact to commit suicide together. She was asserted to have known nothing of Bywaters's intention to lie in wait and murder her husband. The woman elected to give evidence, but her admissions under cross-examination were deadly to her.

All through the case it seemed to me that Bywaters was posing, partly consciously, partly unconsciously, as a sort of melodramatic hero. The only time this attitude momentarily deserted him was when the judge in summing up commented upon "the unreal and unnatural atmosphere that had been created around an ordinary charge of a wife and an adulterer murdering a husband."

The trial lasted five days, and the jury retired for

more than two hours before returning a verdict of guilty against both prisoners. Bywaters drew himself up in the dock.

"I say the verdict of the jury is wrong," he declared. "Edith Thompson is not guilty. I am no murderer, I am no assassin." The last words were practically those with which Mr. Whiteley had concluded his speech.

Mrs. Thompson was on the verge of collapse. "I am not guilty. Oh, God, I am not guilty!" she cried.

The appeal of both prisoners was heard by the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Darling, and Mr. Justice Salter, and dismissed. An extensively signed petition for the reprieve of Mrs. Thompson was rejected. On the morning of January 9, 1923, they were hanged—the woman at Holloway, the man at Pentonville Prison.

In the controversy that arose about this case a good deal of false sentiment was invoked. Many of the disputants overlooked the fact that this was a cruel and calculated murder in which it was hard to see a redeeming feature.

Think of the man who was killed—a comparatively young man—walking along that darkened street at dead of night to his death, with that woman by his side, holding his attention and listening with strained nerves for the attack she knew perfectly well was to come. Whichever of the stories told by Bywaters one accepts—that he waited for them or that he stole up behind them—it is clear that after the first treacherous stab in the back Thompson had no chance at all. Imagine that grim struggle with the woman standing by, raising no voice to call for help—a struggle that by the evidence of the bloodstains we traced was carried on for nearly fifty feet. Not until the murderer had done his work and made good his escape did she call assistance for her dying husband. That her distress was genuine when she did some minutes later ask passers-by to fetch a doctor I do not doubt. It may

have been that some feeling of remorse had come over her when the plan that she and her lover had concocted had reached its dramatic consummation. I am inclined to think that that was so, for she could scarcely have been certain that her husband would be dead by the time that help arrived.

On the other hand, she might have felt that awkward questions about her inaction would be asked if she took no step of the kind. Whatever her state of mind and body, she had control enough over herself not to betray Bywaters. That must have called for consummate acting, for practically every word and action during the next twenty-seven hours was calculated to keep the truth from us. She very nearly succeeded, and only the instant wide net that was successfully spread for her lover, when at last we got a hint of his existence, enabled us to get the damning evidence that led to their conviction.

As for Bywaters, although he cannot be set down as an unsophisticated youth, for he was experienced much beyond his age, and of strong and dominating character, he was blindly infatuated. Whichever of them first thought of murder, there is no question that she had such power over him that he was prepared to do her bidding, even at the cost of his own life.

CHAPTER XXV

"Publish and Be Damned"

THE most elusive and difficult of all criminals with whom the C. I. D. is troubled is the blackmailer. This is not because blackmailers as a class are clever, but because their victims are usually too paralyzed with fright to think clearly, and fear possible unpleasantness if they go to the police or consult a lawyer. Just in the same way a man with an aching tooth may fear a dentist.

This may sound weak and absurd, but I have known men of high intelligence, who would be the first to condemn yielding to a blackmailer in other people, but who have allowed themselves to be bled. The point of view is different. It needs great courage—or great impudence—for a man to admit that he has made a fool of himself. True, even when a case gets to court, the name of the victim is never published to the world. But there are relations, friends, the intimate circle of professional, business, or social interests from whom it is almost impossible that the story can be kept. This is the fear that haunts the subject of the blackmailer. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred he takes what he thinks is the easiest course and pays—and keeps on paying. In his agony of mind he does not consider that a stand on his part would almost certainly end the matter without the publicity he dreads. Few crimes are punished with more heavy sentences than blackmail, and the mere possibility that action will be taken is enough.

Thousands of people are blackmailed, and yet it is a singular thing that in many cases the secret which they

dread being revealed is nothing very terrible in itself. It may amount to nothing more than an inadvertently compromising situation. Usually it is some moral lapse into which a person has fallen or been trapped. The more spotless the victim's career, the blacker the incident appears to him—and be sure it loses nothing as painted by the blackmailer. Where the man of the world might say in the words of the Duke of Wellington, when threatened, "Publish and be damned," the clergyman, the member of a welfare organization, the suburban mayor falls a comparatively easy prey. Whether the statement against him is true or not, he fears lest it should become a matter of gossip.

This is the common run of blackmail, although of course there are flights higher and lower. Some of the biggest blackmailers I ever knew were much too clever to come within the legal term of the word. There have been cases where doubtful financiers have submitted to heavy blackmail rather than risk the possibilities of having their schemes attacked.

Blackmail is not a specialist criminal profession in the sense, say, that counterfeiting or forgery is. It is nearly always a side line, in which the operator seizes opportunity as it comes. All is fish that comes to his net. But now and again there spring up gangs who infest the West End, watching for likely victims. These are of the very worst type and will stoop to anything. Visitors to particular houses are watched, and their names, addresses, and circumstances ascertained. Women of low character frequently act in collusion with blackmailers—one of the oldest and still the most common methods being to break in upon a man who has fallen to the lure of one of these sirens with the demand, "What are you doing with my wife?" Many other devices are used to entrap men into compromising situations.

Apart from the general reluctance of many victims of

blackmail to give information or to prosecute, there are other delicate difficulties that beset the police in dealing with a crime of this class. It is sometimes very hard to say where a reasonable demand ends and blackmail begins. An unscrupulous man may use the threat of a prosecution for blackmail to frighten off a rightful claim. A simple illustration is that of a man who has promised to share a secret commission. "Pay me my half," says the confederate, "or I'll tell what I know." "Don't you blackmail me," retorts the other. Or suppose the even more difficult case where a woman declares that a particular man is the father of her child. "You are attempting blackmail," he asserts. Who, in such a case, can determine where the truth lies? And within sight of this borderline are those cases where a legitimate claim is put forward with a threat which the maker may be entirely unaware turns his demand into blackmail.

A year or two ago my attention was drawn to the operations of one of the most dangerous gangs of blackmailers I ever knew. For three years they had bled a wealthy man, whom I will call X, and they had obtained very nearly £11,000 from him before the Director of Public Prosecutions was informed, and we were asked to take the matter in hand.

The investigation, it seemed to me, would be likely to call for delicate and pertinacious work, and I entrusted it to Chief Detective Inspector Alfred Collins, giving him such personal assistance as I could from time to time. Some very pretty detective work was done in breaking up the combination.

X lived in the country. His troubles began during a trip to London when he paid a visit to a theatre and fell into conversation with a genial young man who introduced himself as Norman Stuart and said he was engaged in business at Bath. X liked his new acquaintance, and they agreed to meet again.

Stuart had seen golden possibilities in X for although, as far as Scotland Yard was concerned, his only criminal exploit hitherto had been the stealing of a handbag, he knew something of the potentialities of blackmail. His wife and her brother had, at any rate, dabbled in the business, and, in fact, they were both convicted for an affair of this kind a little while later.

But it was not to them that Stuart turned on this occasion. It was to a gentleman named Taylor, who had served an apprenticeship to life that fitted him to become, in the words of the Lord Chief Justice, "an artist in blackmail." He was a clever, well educated man with a knowledge of several languages, and was on friendly terms with some of the choicest rogues in London. He had seen the inside of various prisons: for desertion while on active service, for theft, for receiving, and for assault. Incidentally, he was a drug addict. No doubt it was his fertile mind that conceived the details of the plot that was carried out.

For the moment it was arranged that he should pose as Stuart's brother. Stuart met X again and took him to his "brother's" rooms in Shaftesbury Avenue, where he kindly offered to allow X to leave a bag. As they were talking together, two men entered and made an accusation against X. He protested indignantly and was met with a threat to call the police unless he immediately gave them fifty pounds.

Well for him if he had defied them at that moment. But he lost his head and paid with a check. That was the beginning.

These two men were Taylor and a man who passed by the name of Richards or Leonard, but who was really a Russian named Abram Glown, whose record showed that he was willing to assist in any scheme of blackmail. A week or two passed, and these two men called on X

at his home. Stuart, they said, had had to leave his job and was about to go to Algiers. They wanted money for his passage and his outfit—a matter of ninety-five pounds. Again X paid. Four days afterwards Taylor returned—always posing as Stuart's brother—and demanded more money. He got eighty-one pounds.

The comparative ease with which these sums had been extorted convinced the gang that it was less a question of how much X would stand than how much could be extracted from him. From then on they concocted a number of ingenious stories as an excuse for preying on him. Taylor called with a woman who he said was his wife. X's conduct at their rooms, he said, had resulted in their having to leave. He was given one hundred and twenty pounds. Within a week he was back with a tale of his wife's sudden death. X contributed two hundred pounds towards the funeral expenses. The reader will observe how the amounts were growing.

A few days afterwards Richards gathered fifty pounds from X to meet some debts. So in one way and another they continued to bleed him for a year or eighteen months by fifties and hundreds. But their appetite had grown, and they resolved to widen their operations.

A fresh character appeared. This was a man who called himself Ferguson, and who was known in certain circles as Maples, but whose real name was Joseph Townshend. Of many criminal enterprises in which he had been engaged during the previous fifteen years—which included housebreaking and robbery with violence, his favourite was blackmail. In some of his schemes he forced his wife, who was an exceedingly attractive woman, to act as an unwilling decoy—and I think she ultimately left him on this account. One young man was advised to get in touch with Maples if he came across anyone worth while blackmailing. He did so. A sum of

£650 was extorted from a certain man. Maples took his decoy to Cardiff, gave him the slip, and left him penniless to walk back to London.

X was at Cowes when Maples, as Ferguson, called upon him. He was, he declared, the father of Stuart, and he was anxious to get his boy and Richards off to Australia. I have an impression that he sympathized with X over the blackmailing to which he had been subjected by Taylor, and he went away with a check for £60 getting another £36 a few days afterwards.

Three or four months elapsed. X had begun to breathe freely again and was feeling that his purgatory had come to an end when Stuart reappeared with a woman whom he introduced as his wife. Australia, he observed, did not suit him, so he had returned. He wanted to go to America and had come to X for £61 to pay his passage money. Again he got it.

X was obviously becoming a little tired, and no doubt it appeared to the conspirators that their next step must be a little stronger. A fresh scare on new lines had to be thrown into him—one which would induce him to loosen his purse strings on a more generous scale. So a scheme was thought out which called for the services of a new actor—a young man of good family but bad record named Tannen, who had spent some years at Borstal. Stuart and Taylor kept to their old part as brothers. Tannen was to be "Detective Lynch," of the Metropolitan Police.

"Detective Lynch" explained that he practically had Stuart under arrest for misappropriating some bonds belonging to a woman. This woman was prepared to abandon the prosecution if she could get her money back. Stuart hinted that he would draw X into a scandal unless he took steps to stop the prosecution in the only possible way—by finding the money. The credulity of X appears to have been only equalled by his panic, and he swallowed

this whole. Thoroughly frightened, he nevertheless asked whether any other demands would be made if he paid the money.

"No," Taylor reassured him. "This will be the finish of it."

Whether X believed that or not, he made out two checks—one of £850 to replace the bonds, the other for £250 for the "expenses" of "Detective Lynch." Within three days Taylor had drawn up two letters, one addressed to the commissioner of police, the other to a personal friend of X. To suppress them X paid £2,000.

Then Maples came back with Stuart. Having already used up Australia and the United States, this time he wanted to send his "son" to South Africa. That meant another £400. Taylor kept up the pressure and got £800 "to start a small garage." Stuart meanwhile had changed his mind to South America as his place of emigration and threatened trouble unless he got £1,400, but accepted £800. Two weeks went by and he (so he said) got married. That cost X another £200. Maples about this time managed to extract a further £600 and Taylor another £200, X accompanying this latter with the remark that he had no more money and had put the matter in the hands of his lawyers.

"I can see the game is up," observed Taylor coolly.

By this time so many people had become involved in the bleeding of X that it was perhaps not altogether surprising that some hint of a wealthy "philanthropist"—I use his own word—should reach the ears of a rogue outside the gang, who saw a chance of profiting. This was Arthur Brown, whose real line of business was that of a clever and versatile burglar, and who was known to his associates as "Newcastle Arthur." Through Tannen he became acquainted with the details, and the pair followed X to Amsterdam.

"Newcastle Arthur" introduced himself as "Detective

Benshaw of Scotland Yard." On a card which he presented as a touch of verisimilitude were the words, "Shadowing. Blackmail a Specialty."

"Detective Benshaw" was eager to help X out of his troubles. "I can square this matter for you," he said. "If you give me the money I shall be able to put it all right."

The confiding X gave him various checks totalling £1,400. The matter, however, was not "squared." Taylor, Maples & Co. became daily bolder and more menacing. Members of the gang haunted the vicinity of X's country house and became abusive when they were refused admittance. Realizing that X had become "difficult," they played what they imagined would be a trump card. A poster was printed with the words, "The Villainous Story of ——," and this was left at X's house with a note:

DEAR MR. ——:

I am sending you a sample of my posters. Do you like them? The story should have been by Rosseau, but sorry to say it is by Taylor. Please let me have check for £3,000 which I lent you, otherwise I shall be forced to take drastic steps.

Yours Truly,
G. TAYLOR.

This did not have the effect anticipated, and Taylor then had the daring impudence to get a lawyer to write a letter to X threatening legal proceedings unless £3,000, part of a debt "on account of a business transaction," was paid. Needless to say, this lawyer did not know the truth of the matter and was under the impression that the debt had been incurred in some gambling transaction. This letter was not answered.

Meantime, "Detective Benshaw," who did not care

much what happened to the gang, reported to X that he had been unsuccessful in attempting to settle the affair. "They are going to make still further demands on you," he said. "You had better come with me and see a solicitor in London." He got £100 for expenses, and X followed his advice. X was so pleased with him that he sent him another £400 when, a day or two afterwards, "Detective Benshaw" wrote reminding him of his services.

The lawyer to whom X went immediately realized what had been happening and sent his client to the Director of Public Prosecutions. Thus it was that Scotland Yard was asked to take up the investigation.

We had to work under considerable handicaps. We were called in in 1927, and the blackmailing had then been going on for three and a half years. Most of the people concerned had been using false names, and to find out who they were, what they were, and where they could be located was all the more difficult because inquiries had to be made with the greatest caution and secrecy. We were anxious to bag the whole gang, but until we had traced and got reasonable evidence against each of them, isolated arrests would have resulted in the likelihood of several of them getting away. It happened that one of the worst of the gang was tremendously elusive, and as the inquiry went on, week after week, there was always the fear at the back of our minds that something might happen to cause us to lose the lot. Finally, however, tenacity and patience were rewarded. Four of the men I have referred to were arrested practically simultaneously, and the other two a little later—the most surprised of the lot being "Detective Benshaw," who looked upon himself as an ill-used and misunderstood man.

They were tried before the Lord Chief Justice in May, 1927, and all were found guilty. The sentences imposed gave a wholesome shock to the blackmailing community. Taylor was sent to penal servitude for life; Maples got

fifteen years; Stuart twelve years; Leonard ten years; Tannen ten years; and Brown eight years.

There were some interesting passages in the judge's summing up. He remembered, he said, the case of a young officer who was met in Hyde Park by an extremely affable young man who asked him, "Can you kindly tell me the time?" The officer immediately knocked him down. That method, commented Lord Hewart, was a little summary.

In better language than I can use the Lord Chief Justice demolished an idea held by many people—including blackmailers themselves—that the only people who could be held responsible in a blackmailing case were those who put a threat into words.

"You may take it from me that the law is not so foolish as that. The artist in blackmail, you may think, is a little economical in words. Why say too much if something less will answer the purpose? Why have too many talking if one will do? Yet it may be desirable that there should be other persons on the scene. Why? Is it not obviously for the purpose of terrifying the victim?

"My mind goes back to a case of blackmailing adventure where a certain signature was needed to a check. One of the parties to the enterprise went a long way to a race meeting where the person whose signature was desired was likely to be. He was asked, 'Did you do anything to speak to him?' and he replied, 'Oh, dear me, no. It was intended that he should see me there, and the check was then to be presented by somebody else.' "

CHAPTER XXVI

Murder in a Trunk

FEW people realize the amount of work that is involved in any complicated murder investigation. Quite apart from all other things, the clerical labour alone is immense. I have known hundreds and even as many as a thousand statements taken in one case. A huge pile of material is accumulated, and, of course, no one knows at the outset what may or may not be irrelevant. There are things that have no seeming importance by themselves till taken in conjunction with other information gathered later. All kinds of people fancy they can provide a clue. This, incidentally, is another argument in favour of a national detective organization. Small police forces have not the machinery to deal with a big inquiry of this nature. They are liable to become snowed under.

How many individuals were seen and statements taken before John Robinson was arrested for the murder of Mrs. Minnie Bonati I hesitate to say. There was an enormous amount of good detective work put into the case, but the unravelling of the mystery was due, in a great measure, to appreciation of the significance of such trifles as laundry marks and a half-burnt match stick.

On Tuesday, May 10, 1927, Divisional Detective Inspector Steele, of Bow Street, reported that a trunk which had been left in the cloak room at Charing Cross Railway Station had been found to contain the dismembered body of a woman. With Superintendent Hawkins I went along to decide what steps should be taken. We

felt that this was one of those cases where the murder might have happened anywhere, and Chief Detective Inspector (now Superintendent) George Cornish was sent from Scotland Yard to handle the investigation.

The details on which he had to work were at first rather misleading than helpful. There was no certainty as to the day or time when the trunk had been deposited, and the condition of the body suggested that the woman had been dead longer than in fact she had. The letter "A" was painted at each end of the trunk, and the initials "I. F. A." were on the lid. A tie-on label was addressed in block letters, "F. Austin to St. Lenards." Among a quantity of bloodstained clothing was an article marked "P. Holt," and another with two laundry marks—one plainly "447," the other with a blurred figure or letter, which might have been either "18—" or "—81," but in fact was "581."

One of the earliest steps was to see if there was a Mr. F. Austin at St. Leonards. A gentleman of this name was traced, but it was quite obvious that he could have had nothing to do with the crime. Meanwhile, the newspapers were supplied with photographs of the trunk, and active direct inquiries made at places where second-hand trunks were sold, and at laundries. Some vehicle must have been used to carry the trunk to the station, and as the most likely probability was a cab, inquiries were also pushed among London taxi drivers.

Within twenty-four hours of the discovery of the crime we had traced the marked clothing as coming from the house of a family named Holt, who lived in Chelsea. One at least of the garments had belonged to a Miss Holt, but she was alive and well. Her mother, however, was able to identify the body as that of a woman who had been in her service as a cook, but had been discharged, after a week, in the previous year. The name she had passed under was "Mrs. Roles." Beyond the fact that

there existed a Mr. Roles she could tell us little more of importance.

This diverted that portion of the inquiry to the whereabouts of Roles, whose address was unknown. All that night I was out assisting in the direction of the search. By the early morning the man had been traced and was invited to come to the local police station. There, with my old friend the late Superintendent Hawkins and Cornish, I saw him. He was quite frank with us. The woman had used his name but was not his wife. They had lived together for a time, but there had been some amount of bickering, and finally they had parted. His story and that of his employer showed that it would have been utterly impossible for him to have had any concern with the murder.

Through a girl who had known the dead woman, we gathered that her real name was Mrs. Minnie Bonati, and that she had been the wife of an Italian waiter. We found this man within a short while. He had been separated from his wife for a considerable period, and it was quickly evident that no suspicion could attach to him. We were now, however, definitely sure of the identity of the dead woman—he had recognized her by a crooked index finger, and we had gleaned a number of facts about her habits and temperament that might prove useful. The last time she had been seen alive was at about four o'clock on the afternoon of May 4th.

Developments had meanwhile taken place in other directions. A picture of the trunk had been recognized by a dealer in second-hand baggage as having been bought from his shop in the Brixton Road some days before the discovery at the cloakroom. He was quite definite that it was the same trunk, and indeed, the distinctive marks on it left little room for mistake. It had been sold to a man who said that he required some old cheap thing to hold a few clothes and oddments for shipping abroad.

There was some haziness about the description of the man, and only very general details of his appearance could be gathered. Another difficulty was that there was some uncertainty as to the actual date on which the purchase took place.

I do not wish the reader to imagine that the sequence of events in the investigation went quite so smoothly as I have here set them down. There are many persons who disappear every year for reasons that have nothing to do with crime, and all kinds of people had to be seen before the body was finally identified. Other cross-currents to divert the energies of the detectives engaged arose. For instance, in the course of the inquiries at Hastings and St. Leonards, the name "P. Holt" was found in a hotel register. A resident in Brixton came forward with a story of a lodger answering the description (so far as it went) of the man who had bought the trunk and who had vanished at about that time. These things were pure coincidence and had nothing to do with the case. Again, there were men with whom Mrs. Bonati was believed to have been associated to be looked for—in particular, a chauffeur with whom she was said to have been very friendly and of whom we knew only the Christian name. All these trails led nowhere.

One little piece of luck had come our way. A boy—a shoeblack—had picked up a piece of crumpled paper that he had noticed blowing about Charing Cross Station. Opening it he found that it was a cloakroom ticket which on examination proved to be the veritable voucher that had been given for the black trunk.

This enabled us to fix the day upon which it had been left as May 6th. The ticket whose number preceded this one had been issued to a woman who remembered, for some special reason, the exact time at which she had arrived at the station in a cab and entrusted her trunk to a porter for deposit in the cloakroom. So we were able

to limit our questions to porters on duty at the time. In fact, the same man had dealt with both trunks. The second one—the black trunk—had been also brought by taxi, and he remembered that it had been wedged so tightly on the cab that a little piece of the lid had given way as he tried to extricate it.

Thus we arrived at practical certainty that the black trunk had been taken to the station by taxicab, and we were clear within a minute or two of the time of arrival. There were, I think, three or four cabmen who informed us that they had driven fares with trunks lettered "A" to and from various places. This was to be expected, for on any given day numbers of people travel by cab in London with trunks carrying their initials. But there was only one cabman who had carried a trunk of this particular description, at about this particular hour, to Charing Cross Station on that day.

The method by which we confirmed the time was interesting. This taximan had driven two men who were in a great hurry to get from the vicinity of the Royal Automobile Club to the Westminster Police Court in Rochester Row. Immediately after he had set them down a man had hailed him from the opposite side of the road. This man had asked the driver to assist him to get a heavy trunk from inside the doorway of a block of offices to the cab. The taximan was struck by the weight of the trunk.

"What have you got in here—money?" he asked jocularly.

"No—it's books," replied the other.

He was then driven to Charing Cross Station.

Now, it was a pretty safe guess that the men who were in such haste to get to the court were motorists who were due to attend a hearing for some motoring offense. The summonses that had been dealt with that day were looked up. Thus we found two people who were able to fix the time of the incident with pretty close accuracy. Allowing

for the time taken by the journey it corresponded to the time at which the trunk had arrived at Charing Cross Station.

All this fitted in with another fact that had been ascertained. The conductor of an omnibus on the route between Brixton and Victoria remembered on May 6th assisting a passenger, who got on the bus in the Brixton Road, to get a large empty trunk aboard. This man had booked to Victoria but had got off somewhere between Vauxhall and Victoria—the conductor could not remember precisely where, as he was collecting fares at the time. Now, Rochester Row is a turning off the bus routes between these points.

We were narrowing down the investigation but were still a long way from the solution of the mystery. Obviously, the key lay somewhere quite close to Rochester Row. There was the block of business offices where the man with the trunk had been picked up, and we turned our attention to these, although we realized the possibility that the trunk might have been brought to that doorway from some other place. Every available person engaged in the offices was interviewed by Cornish, Steele, and other officers. Sure enough, a black trunk had been noticed standing for some little time in one of the corridors, but there was an impression that it had contained books belonging to one of several organizations that shared offices and held periodical meetings on the top floor of the building. There was a little difficulty in tracing all these people. Another set of empty offices bore the inscription "Edwards & Co., Estate & Business Transfer Agents."

Who, we asked, were Edwards & Co.? Where had they gone?

It appeared that the rooms had been taken by a Mr. John Robinson, in March. He had started business as Edwards & Co., and on May 9th the landlord had re-

ceived a letter from him in somewhat the following terms: "Dear Sir,—I am sorry to inform you that I have gone broke, so cannot use your office further. Let the people who supplied the typewriter take it away. My rent is paid."

Beyond all question it was necessary to find Robinson. Quite possibly he would prove to have as little to do with the crime as the people we had previously traced—Austin, Roles, Bonati, and others. That remained to be seen.

The check that he had paid to the landlord led to inquiries at the bank. From that we found that he had been living in lodgings at Camberwell. On May 6th he had left them, saying he was going to Lancashire. Really, he had merely gone to apartments at Kennington, not far away. But in the rooms he had vacated there was a telegram he had sent to a person at a certain address which had been returned to him undelivered. In fact, this was a mistake. The person to whom it had been sent was actually at that place. We kept quiet watch, and when, on the evening of Thursday, May 19th, this individual met Robinson in the street near the Elephant and Castle, two officers were close at hand and invited Robinson to come to Scotland Yard. He readily agreed.

I made a point of being present a part of the time when he was interviewed by Cornish. There was nothing in his appearance or manner to suggest a man who would commit a cold-blooded murder. He had all his wits about him and told his story with great plausibility. He had been all sorts of things. Originally a Blackpool tram conductor, he had served in the army until discharged as medically unfit, in 1923. He went to Ireland where he was "married"—bigamously, as we discovered—and had afterwards stayed in Bradford and Folkestone and London. He had been greengrocer, bookmaker, milkman—but his chief occupation had been that of a public-house barman. Finally, he had started as an estate agent, but

had been obliged (so his story went) to close his office for lack of funds. On the day the murder took place—May 4th—he had met a Guards bandsman in a public house, and they had remained there till about three o'clock, when the soldier accompanied Robinson to his office and stayed with him till half-past four. Robinson closed his office about five and went to his lodgings. He remarked, "I don't remember seeing any trunk or bag in the entrance to the office on Friday, May 6th. So far as I know, I have never seen Mrs. Bonati or any of her associates."

As it chanced, both the man who had sold the trunk and the cabman who had carried it to Charing Cross Station were at this time suffering from illnesses which made it impossible for them to leave their homes. These were the only people who could be expected to remember anything of the appearance of the man with the black trunk. Robinson was asked whether he had any objection to going to them. Quite nonchalantly and cheerfully he expressed his readiness, and his acceptance of this somewhat unusual course was a point in his favour. Both of them, in fact, failed to identify him. It transpired, later, that he had turned down the brim of his hat, pulled up his coat collar and taken other precautions so that he should not be easily recognized again by people who had no special reason to take note of him. The willingness to confront them was an example of brazen nerve which I have not often seen equalled.

So far as he was concerned there was apparently nothing more to be done. There was no indication that he had been in any way connected with the dead woman or with the trunk. He was allowed to go.

Nine days had passed since the discovery of the body. One avenue after another had been vigorously explored, but all our work had led us to a blank wall. We determined on a fresh scrutiny of the whole of the available

data to see whether any new line of inquiry would be suggested, and a conference of all the officers who had been engaged in the case took place.

Among many other steps taken was a reëxamination of Robinson's former office in Rochester Row. This was entrusted to a couple of enthusiastic and painstaking detective sergeants—Clarke and Burt—who probed into every nook and corner of the two sparsely furnished rooms. There was little probability that they would lay their hands on anything fresh, and there was certainly nothing obvious in the office to provoke suspicion. They, however, took nothing for granted.

Robinson was a great cigarette smoker, as was evident from a waste-paper basket in one room into which, as well as odds and ends of paper, had been thrown a large number of cigarette stumps and burnt matches. Clarke settled down to examine methodically every trifle the basket contained. The cigarette ends and the matches were taken out one by one. At last Clarke was struck by the discoloration of one match stick. Taking it closer to the light he came to the conclusion that it had been stained with blood. Here was the first definite suspicion that linked Robinson with the crime. When he had cleaned that office, as he must have done with the most scrupulous care, that match stick was the one trifle that had escaped his attention. If murderers didn't make these mistakes detectives would often have a poor time.

Significant though this bloodstained match was, it was quickly reinforced by a discovery that even more directly implicated Robinson with the crime. Among the articles that had been found in the trunk with the body was a dirty and heavily bloodstained check duster. When it was first looked at it was in such a condition that no distinctive marks could be seen on it. Now, however, it had been cleaned, and a minute examination showed a number of letters in one corner. These were finally deciphered as

the word "Greyhound." It was recalled that Robinson had been a barman, and we went to some trouble to find where the duster had come from. We found the Greyhound Hotel from which it had come; we found that the girl whom Robinson had bigamously married had been working there; and one employee was able to say that that particular duster had been in her possession a few weeks before. There could be little doubt that it had been carried home by "Mrs. Robinson," and had been taken by Robinson from the rooms they sometimes shared together to his office. At a later date it was identified by a girl whom Robinson had employed as a typist (who, incidentally, had left before the murder) as a duster that had been used in the office.

These developments had taken place on Sunday, May 22, 1927. The next morning when I opened my daily paper I was confronted with the headlines:

TRUNK CRIME DEAD END
SCOTLAND YARD BAFFLED
300 STATEMENTS TAKEN
AND NO CLUE

As a matter of fact, that very morning Detective Sergeants Clarke and Seymour had, by my instructions, gone to Robinson's lodgings in Kennington, roused him from sleep, and asked him to dress and accompany them to Scotland Yard.

They arrived a little earlier at the Yard than had been expected. After a while Cornish saw Robinson for a moment and told him that he would see him shortly in connection with the statement that he had already made. There was an interval, and Robinson became impatient.

"Will you ask Mr. Cornish to see me?" he said. "I want to tell him all about it."

Cornish went in, and Robinson, after the usual warn-

ing, plunged into his story. He had, he said, fallen in with a strange woman at Victoria Station on May 4th, and she had suggested going back to his office with him. She sat there while he wrote some letters, and then remarked that she was hard up and asked him for a pound. He told her that he would give her nothing. She flew into a rage and became abusive. As she came near his chair he pushed her away.

"She bent down," said Robinson, "as though to pick up something from the fireplace and came towards me. I hit her on the face with my right hand. I think I hit the left side of her face, but at this time I was also in a temper and I am not certain. She fell backwards; she struck a chair in falling and it fell over. As she fell she sort of sat down and rolled over with her head in the fireplace. I left her there and came out, closing the office door behind me."

Then he went home. Returning to his office the next morning he was surprised to find her dead. "I was in a hopeless position; I did not know what to do," he said.

There followed the grim details of the purchase of a knife, the cutting up of the body, and the journey in search of a trunk into which he had packed the remains. In a public house he found a casual acquaintance whom he induced to help him downstairs with the trunk. Afterwards he called a cab and took the trunk to Charing Cross Station. Robinson added that he had put the cloakroom ticket in his pocket, but when searching for it to destroy it on his way back to his office, he realized that he had lost it.

The knife he had buried on Clapham Common. He was taken there and pointed out to Cornish and myself a may tree, white with bloom, underneath which a carving knife was found. It was a queer coincidence that this had been purchased at the very place that had been patronized by Mahon for a similar purpose.

Robinson was charged with murder. The point that was chiefly contested at the trial was whether his story of Minnie Bonati's death was true or false. Put quite shortly, the medical experts for the prosecution said that the bruises found on the dead woman were not explained by Robinson's account. Their theory was that the woman had become unconscious after a struggle and had then been deliberately suffocated by someone who had pressed a cushion or some other soft article over her face. On the other hand, it was argued that Robinson had struck without any intention of killing and that her death was due to accident. Perhaps this latter view might have been accepted by the jury had it not been for Robinson's conduct after the murder. As it was, they found him guilty, and he was hanged.

CHAPTER XXVII

Murder Is an Art

MURDER investigations, so far as Scotland Yard is concerned, happen much more frequently in books than in real life. From a detective point of view these homicide crimes are either very simple or very difficult to handle. In the great majority of cases people are killed in some emotional crisis, and the guilt of a particular person is palpable immediately. Once in a while, however, there happens a crime which taxes the energy and resource of those who have to deal with it. I have found that success in these cases has often depended upon some unhesitating swift stroke which has, so to speak, taken the culprit unawares. The point at which action of this sort should be taken must always depend upon circumstances, and I am far from urging any rash, ill-considered plunge. But I have known murderers and other criminals to escape because detectives have been too cautious. If a clever criminal knows that he is under suspicion and is given time to think and act, he will take care that, if it is at all possible, lines of inquiry shall be blocked and pertinent evidence destroyed.

A striking instance of the value of action before a clever criminal was on his guard was the case of Herbert Armstrong, the lawyer of Hay, in Brecon, who was hanged for poisoning his wife.

All we knew at first was that a couple of attempts had, it was supposed, been made to poison a young lawyer, Mr. O. N. Martin, who practised at Hay. Several small

circumstances directed suspicion to Armstrong, and some odd features of an illness that had culminated in the death of his wife were remembered. The attention of the Home Office and the Director of Public Prosecutions was called to the matter, and it was felt that some inquiry by Scotland Yard was desirable.

I was then the senior superintendent of the C. I. D. and was naturally consulted. As soon as the situation was explained to me, I appreciated the difficulties. Armstrong was a man of education and standing, clerk to the local justices, and it seemed a very delicate question as to how the affair should be dealt with. It seemed to me that there were only two ways of making the investigation.

The first of these was to send an officer down to Hay to make comprehensive inquiries in the district and to take statements from all those people who were likely to throw any light on the affair. This would result in either increasing or weakening the suspicion against Armstrong. But no man with any knowledge of detective work could fail to realize that it would be impossible—especially in a small town—to prevent some hint of these activities reaching Armstrong's ears. If he was guilty, the moment that he knew or guessed Scotland Yard was taking a hand he would take every precaution likely to occur to a clever lawyer, and almost certainly destroy everything within his power that might appear unfavourable to him.

The alternative was to take, with great caution, only those steps that were absolutely necessary to make sure that there was some substance in the allegations, and then go direct to Armstrong and ask whether he cared to make any explanation. If he was innocent, this would give him an opportunity to show it and do away with the necessity for extensive inquiries that might give rise to unpleasant talk.

The authorities agreed that this latter course was the

best adapted to the circumstances. Chief Detective Inspector Alfred Crutchett, an officer in whose ability and discretion I had the highest confidence, was put in charge of the case. The details that it was necessary for him to know were gleaned in the strictest secrecy. They amounted to this: Mr. Martin, who had recently married, had received a box of chocolates from some unknown source. They were passed round to some visitors, and at least one became ill. Subsequently, it was found that arsenic had been inserted in the chocolates. A little while afterwards Armstrong invited Mr. Martin to tea. There had been some acute business differences between them, and imagining that these would be discussed, Mr. Martin went. On his return home he became seriously ill and was found to have been poisoned with arsenic.

This was towards the end of October, 1921, and when, a little later, the local doctor was drawn into a discussion by Armstrong on the amount of arsenic that would constitute a fatal dose, a growing suspicion became much stronger.

When Crutchett took up the case, Mr. Martin was being persistently pressed by Armstrong to go again to tea. He was warned not to accept these invitations and, I believe, was sometimes embarrassed in avoiding them. Finally, there was a strong invitation to dinner on the last night of the old year.

But Armstrong dined alone that night, for Crutchett was ready to act. Without warning he descended on Armstrong's office with the local deputy chief constable. The visit must have come as a bombshell to the lawyer who, till that moment, had been in complete ignorance that he was suspected.

Crutchett told him bluntly that Mr. Martin had suffered from symptoms of arsenical poisoning after the tea party, and that it was known that Armstrong had bought

arsenic some months before. He added, with the usual warning, that Armstrong might make a statement if he wished.

Armstrong elected to do so, and when it was finished, was put under arrest for attempted murder. He was searched, and papers and other things taken from his pockets were placed in a parcel for detailed examination later. Then came a singular incident. Permission was given him to sit at his desk to attend to one or two urgent business letters, and he was detected trying to abstract a small packet, which, in fact, contained 3¾ grains of arsenic, from the parcel. Other arsenic was found concealed at his home. Had he been given the slightest inkling beforehand, what chance would there have been of his leaving this poison to be discovered and used as evidence against himself?

A couple of days after his arrest the body of his wife was exhumed, and it was clear that she had been poisoned —in fact, so much arsenic had been given her that it had percolated through her coffin to the surrounding earth.

Other details of the case as they were explored revealed certain amatory adventures of Armstrong into which it is unnecessary to enter. He was a badly henpecked little man, and his wife had suffered from mental trouble during the closing months of her life. A will in his handwriting, but signed by her, left all her property to him without even mentioning their three children. His reasons for attempting to poison Mr. Martin were obvious. There was, I believe, talk of other victims, but whether there was any substance in these rumours or not, there was no need to go into them. Armstrong was convicted of the murder of his wife and hanged.

One of the oddest murder cases with which I ever had to deal was that of a woman whose body had been found in a room at a lodging house for married couples. She had

clearly been murdered, and we discovered that the previous afternoon and evening she had been in the company of a particular man with whom she had long been on familiar terms. Both the man and the woman were well known in the district and had been seen violently quarrelling by a number of people. Shortly before midnight, a little before it closed, they had been seen standing on the threshold of the lodging house.

We found the man and asked him a question or two. He admitted that he had been with the woman on the night in question, but he was positive that he had, as was his usual habit, slept by himself at another lodging house near by. This, we soon learned, could not have been so. That particular bed had undoubtedly been empty that night. There were other small but suspicious points, and we put the man under arrest and charged him with murder.

A day or two later Detective Inspector Cleveland informed me that another man was detained at Leyton, on his own confession, for killing the same woman. This fellow had been talking in a casual ward, and when his story had reached the ears of the local police he had been asked to go to the station. I went over to see him, not too well pleased at having my time wasted, for I thought it was one of the usual bogus confessions that are not uncommon in murder cases. He was brought back to Leman Street Station, that being the chief station of the district, where my interview with him was not very satisfactory. Beyond asserting that he was the author of the murder he would give no details.

"You're a detective! Find out!" he sneered, when I pressed him.

"Very well," I said, and ordered his removal to the Commercial Road Police Station, which covered the area where the crime had taken place.

I was uneasy, for, in spite of the circumstantial evi-

dence against the first man, I had a feeling that there might be something in this confession. So I went to Scotland Yard, and after consultation with the authorities there, and with the Director of Public Prosecutions, it was determined that the second man should be charged on his own confession with the crime. This brought about the singular situation that two men were simultaneously under arrest for a murder of which one must in any case be innocent.

Returning to Whitechapel, I asked Dr. Clark, then the divisional surgeon, to make a close examination of the self-accused man's clothes for bloodstains. Nothing was discovered on his outer garments. He was, however, wearing his shirt back to front and inside out. In this way he had contrived to hide the fact that the front was covered with bloodstains. I had inquiries pushed in every direction, and other facts were discovered that left no doubt he was the murderer.

The web of circumstance in which the other man had been involved was then explained. It was true that he had left the woman near the door of the lodging house at a late hour. She must have met the man who took her life almost immediately afterwards. Meanwhile, the first man, in a state of hopeless drunkenness, had slept under a stall in the Spitalfields Market. Another drink or two on the following day had completely obscured his memory, and he honestly believed that he had slept at his usual place. He would certainly have been in some jeopardy but for this opportune confession.

As it was we were faced with a peculiar little problem. We had two prisoners charged with the same murder. To retain the innocent one in custody would have been obviously unfair and yet he could only be discharged by a magistrate. After a conference with Sir Charles Mathews, the then Director of Public Prosecutions, the knot was cut by releasing the first man on his own recog-

nizances, pending a formal discharge. The other was ultimately convicted of manslaughter.

I was perhaps caused more personal anxiety by one murder case, that aroused little public interest, than by many others of which columns have been written. A woman was found stabbed to death in a room in which she lived, in an East End alley. From the circumstances we came to the conclusion that she had lured some man—probably a seaman—there to rob him, and that when her purpose became apparent, he had, in a fit of rage, struck at her with a knife, and, not realizing that he had killed her, walked out of the place. After a while the man was found at Bristol and, as I was bringing him back to London in the train, he told a story that confirmed our theory in every particular. He was a seaman in ill health, who had had a very rough time after being robbed by a woman in South Africa of everything he possessed. He had recently been discharged from a hospital when he met the woman whom he was now accused of having murdered. When she tried to rob him, the remembrance of the previous episode caused him to lose all self-control, and he had struck her down.

He was convicted and sentenced to death. So far as my duty permitted, I went to much trouble to ensure that the authorities should know the whole facts of the case. Nineteen days passed, and then, to my relief, I was summoned to the Home Office to give my views in person. That day the man was reprieved and I must admit that a load was taken off my mind.

Twenty years afterwards, in 1929, this same man called upon me at Scotland Yard, to thank me. He had been released during the war, had volunteered for the army. He had served in France and elsewhere with distinction, reaching, I think, the rank of sergeant. I was

able to give him an opportunity to earn a living in a decent way.

In an earlier chapter I spoke of occasions on which a Sherlock Holmes faculty of quick observation and deduction had proved useful. A case of this sort, in which a clever and well-thought-out plan to avert suspicion was as nearly as possible successful, happened about ten years ago.

A doctor carried on a pretty considerable practice in a working-class district, and among his patients was a considerable proportion of women. He lived somewhere out of town and attended at his surgery at fixed hours.

Towards five o'clock one morning—I remember that it was a Friday and the thirteenth of the month—a couple of plain-clothes officers, who were known to the doctor, were pulled up by him as they were passing near his surgery.

"There is a woman lying drunk over there," he said, pointing to a deeper blur in the gloom of an archway a little distance off.

"We'll go and have a look," said they.

By the light of electric torches they examined the figure, while the doctor loitered by in apparently idle interest.

"I think she's dead," muttered one of them, and the doctor, after a look at the body, agreed.

He was thanked for his help and went away. The officers made arrangements for the body to be taken to the mortuary and reported the matter to Divisional Detective Inspector Pride, a zealous and tenacious officer, who at once became interested in the case. The coroner was also notified and ordered an inquest. Following what, I believe, is the usual practice, the coroner asked the doctor who had been called to the dead woman to make a post-mortem examination.

This might have finished the affair had not Pride, having established the identity of the dead woman, and found that there was a possibility that the woman had consulted the doctor during her life, in spite of his assertion that she was a stranger to him, communicated with me. He observed that the doctor was about to perform the post-mortem.

I hurried from Scotland Yard, and after talking the matter over with Pride, sent for the doctor. He volunteered a statement in which he at first insisted that he had never seen her in life. A little later he admitted that it was possible he had seen her. In fact, we soon got proof that he had attended her professionally. There was no adequate explanation of why he should have been near his surgery instead of in his bed many miles away at that early hour, or of why he should have denied that he knew the dead woman. A detective should always be suspicious of coincidence, and the series in this case made us feel justified in putting him under arrest for murder.

The precaution of locking up the surgery and placing an officer in charge had been taken, and now the place was searched. In looking over it, we came across a towel in which a small earring had caught. This was exactly similar to one which the dead woman had been found to be wearing.

Here was certain proof that the woman had been recently in the surgery, and it was not hard to work out the rest of the facts. The assumption was that she had become unconscious during an illegal operation, and in his attempts to bring her round the doctor had fanned her with a towel, not noticing when he threw it down that an earring had lodged in it.

Finding, at last, that the woman was dead, and knowing the probable consequences if it were revealed that she had died in his surgery, he evolved a scheme for averting suspicion. She was scarcely likely to have told anyone of

her visit to him, and if he made it appear that she had dropped dead in the street from some natural cause, he would remain unsuspected. Thus he had carried out the body and remained in the vicinity till the arrival of the constables, to ensure that no other doctor should be called.

The wholesale extent to which this man had carried on his dreadful trade was made manifest when we pushed inquiries. Statements implicating him were obtained from a hundred and sixteen women, and there were hundreds of others. Incidentally, in going over his surgery, we found that he had dabbled in stolen property. He was charged with murder, but the jury at the Old Bailey brought in a verdict of manslaughter, and he was sent to ten years' penal servitude. One of the most curious things about this affair was the coolness with which this man faced the horrible prospect of making a post-mortem examination of the woman he had killed.

Sometime in the autumn of 1923 "Tommy" Tanner, one of the cleverest and most energetic inspectors in the C. I. D., told me of an odd case of gas-poisoning at Tottenham. A girl named Florence Jones, who had been living with a young man named Sheppard, had been found dead on the couch in their apartment, with a gas tube near her mouth and a piece of cloth tied round her throat. Sheppard, who raised the alarm, declared that he had found her dead and appeared to be much affected.

At first sight the case seemed to be an obvious one of suicide, and there was nothing in the evidence that was given when an inquest was opened that seemed to point to any other conclusion. The inquiry had been adjourned when Tanner came to me with a few things he had learned that put considerable doubt in his mind.

Sheppard, it appeared, was an unbalanced, worthless young individual with whom the girl, then a parlourmaid

in Lord Phillimore's household, had become infatuated. Once, while they were at Oxford, he had tried to strangle her. Then he had come to London, and a little later sent her a letter in which he led her to suppose that he had reformed and was doing well. She came to London and joined him, but had after awhile become disillusioned. Then had come the apparent suicide.

There was little doubt that she had been willing to die, but whether her suicide could have been carried out in that way without assistance was open to question. It seemed to me that advantage had been taken of a moment of despair to make her the victim of a cunning plot. I felt that the man had actually induced and helped her to kill herself. That was just as much murder as if he had shot or stabbed her.

"I'm not going to have this," I told Tanner. "I believe he murdered that girl. Crime is crime. The coroner must know the full facts. I'm going to see this fellow."

I spent many hours of that night in examining every aspect of the case. When I saw Sheppard, the chief question that I wanted answered was, *"Who turned off the gas?"* That could not have been done by the dead girl. But I knew what the reply would be.

Sheppard was accordingly charged with murder. While awaiting trial he wrote some remarkable letters, which bore out my opinion of the way the crime had been committed. She had been led to believe that they were committing suicide together. To one person he wrote:

> No doubt you will be terribly shocked to know that I killed my darling with my own hands, although she consented. I first put the gas tube in her mouth, but in a minute she pulled it out saying she did not like it. She asked me to strangle her with my own hands and to gas myself afterwards, as she did not want me to have a murderer's death. Her last words to me were "Good-

bye, my darling Bob. I will be ready to welcome you, my lover, in the other world. Nobody can have loved as we have. I can ask for nothing better than to die at my boy's hands."

The man was convicted of murder and, if my recollection is right, he laughed in the face of the judges when his appeal was rejected. A few days before the date of the execution he was reprieved.

While undergoing his sentence at Parkhurst Prison, according to the newspaper accounts, he made an attack on a warder's daughter and was, in consequence, certified to be insane and sent to Broadmoor.

Strangely enough, this was the second time he had been charged with murder. In the previous March he had given himself up for killing a woman at Caversham near Reading. It was shown that his confession was bogus, and he was discharged.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Are Murderers Made or Born?

THROWING back my mind over the long array of murderers whom I have known, I am driven to the conclusion that they cannot be classified in any general category. The motives that make a man or woman kill may operate in any class of society among all kinds of people. Murder may equally well be committed because a man is hard and determined or because he is weak and irresolute. It is odd that many of these, even when their guilt is flagrant and palpable, will wince at the word "murder." They will admit that they intended to "kill," but not that they meant to murder. This subtle distinction is usually arrived at by some perverted system of reasoning. "I am no murderer! I am no assassin!" cried Bywaters. Yet the very weapon that he carried and used to attack an unarmed man showed that he had a deadly purpose.

I think that, for all his crudeness, G. J. Smith, who drowned woman after woman in their baths, and whose homicidal career was put a stop to by my old colleague Arthur Neil, was the cleverest murderer of my time. If he had stopped at three or four he might have escaped scot-free. His case was an example of the easy way in which some women fall victims to murderers. Here was a man of neither education, appearance, nor manners, who was accepted at his own valuation, was able to fascinate women of a better class again and again and persuade them to throw in their lot with him. He was a man of exceptional and colossal nerve. He picked up women in many places in all sorts of ways. Thus he must have be-

come known to many people and have had to dodge them or brazen out embarrassing encounters when they ran across him on later occasions.

Of quite a different type was Harry Jacoby, the eighteen-year-old pantry boy, who in March, 1922, murdered Lady White while she was asleep in a West End hotel. He was just a conceited, consequential, precocious boy who rushed into a murder confident in his own cleverness to evade detection. Having gone to her room for the purpose of robbery, he had struck her down with a hammer when she stirred, and then attempted to cover his tracks by telling the night porter of men he had overheard conversing mysteriously in whispers in the basement, and assisted in a search.

At my first visit to the hotel I find that I made a note: "Went to Spencer's Hotel *re* murder of Lady White. No doubt committed by someone inside hotel."

When questioned, Jacoby, like all the rest of the inmates of the place, was full of voluble theories about the crime, and decidedly argumentative in urging them. Within a very little time Superintendent Arthur Neil and Divisional Detective Inspector (now Superintendent) George Cornish were convinced of his guilt and arrested him. Ultimately he confessed and was found guilty and executed. He was a reckless lad of perverted imagination, who some time before the murder had deliberately set fire to a house, heedless of the fact that if an alarm had not been raised in time several people would have been burned to death.

Very unlike this youth was Browne who, with his associate Kennedy, killed Police Constable Gutteridge when he stopped them while they were in a stolen car in a lonely country lane. Browne was an exceptionally determined man who, having undergone penal servitude, was resolved to take any and every risk rather than go back to prison. Jacoby might have shrunk from murder had

he been intelligent enough to realize the probable consequences. Browne looked everything in the face and never hesitated. Any person who menaced his safety was to pay the penalty. He killed remorselessly. Always he was prepared for murder. Strongly passionate men of similar temperament and disposition were Stinie Morrison and Hector Bywaters, who were easily swayed by their uncontrollable tempers.

Patrick Mahon, who killed Miss Emily Kaye at a bungalow on the beach at Pevensey Bay, was, I think, an example of a weak man who drifted into a premeditated crime of violence. This instability had been marked throughout his career, in which there had been several criminal episodes, in spite of the fact that he had had many opportunities to make a comfortable and honest living, and was married to a devoted and clever woman. Mahon, a good-looking fellow of engaging manners, had, through his wife's influence, in 1923, become a sales manager to a certain firm and was moving in respectable circles near Richmond, where he was a popular figure.

At this time he had become entangled in an illicit love affair with Miss Kaye, who had long earned her own living as a secretary, and had contrived to save some six hundred pounds. In the early months of 1924 he was becoming a little tired of her. She, on the other hand, was becoming more than ever infatuated with him, and the fact that she was *enceinte* could not have been much longer concealed. I imagine that she was a person of dominating character and not likely to accept a dismissal easily. In fact, she was pressing him to elope with her—a course he was by no means anxious to take. It may have been, as has been suggested, that she had heard of a term of penal servitude that he had undergone, and used the threat of exposure to maintain her hold on him. To meet her wishes, he would have had to abandon everything—his new-won "respectability," his home, his friends.

At this juncture it was agreed between the two to make a "love experiment" by spending a holiday together at a bungalow near Pevensey Bay. Both of them had decided that this should bring affairs to a climax. Miss Kaye's idea was to show the man that he could be happy with her and to settle final plans for their flight abroad; his was a more sinister project. To explain his absence to his wife, he made the excuse that he was travelling on business.

On Thursday, May 1, 1924, a Mr. Beard, who had formerly been divisional detective inspector of the L Division, rang up Scotland Yard and was invited to come along and see me. He told a rather singular story. A Mrs. Mahon had found a Waterloo Station cloakroom ticket that had dropped from one of her husband's pockets. She was an intelligent woman and had not altogether swallowed Mahon's excuses for his recent absences. She had asked Beard to find out to what the ticket referred. He discovered that it was a voucher for a locked Gladstone bag. By lifting the flaps at the side of the bag he managed to get a glimpse inside. Thus he discerned some articles of woman's clothing that appeared to be stained with blood. This it was that had brought him to us.

It was conceivable that all this might have an innocent —or at any rate a non-criminal—explanation. At this time we did not even know that there was a woman missing. One of the possibilities that flitted across my mind was that the owner of the bag might have had associations with some woman and used the bag when marketing for temporary housekeeping with her. The presence of the clothes would be reason enough for not taking the bag home.

The incident was a singular one, however, and I felt it worth while to take some step. I asked Chief Inspector (now Superintendent) Percy Savage to look into the business. Officers were sent to keep watch on the cloak-

room, with instructions to ask any person who claimed the bag to accompany them to the nearest police station, and then to inform Savage and myself.

I was at dinner on the following evening when a message reached me that Mahon had been detained and was then at Scotland Yard. I hurried over. The bag had been more closely examined and was found to contain a cook's knife and a few bloodstained articles of woman's clothing, which had been heavily sprinkled with a disinfectant.

Savage handled the affair with very great tact and acumen. At the time we knew nothing about Mahon save that he was supposed to be a business man. The blood marks in the bag might have nothing to do with any crime, for there had not yet been time to have them scientifically tested to decide whether they had been caused by human blood. I was with him when the detained man was asked for an explanation.

Mahon's first reply was that the bag had been used to carry meat for dogs. He was told that this answer was not satisfactory, for we believed that the stains were of human blood. I think this probably caused him to give us credit for knowing a great deal more of the facts than we did. There was a long silence and at last he observed that he would tell the truth.

After giving details of Miss Kaye's identity and his association with her, the effect of his statement was that during the course of a quarrel at the bungalow she had thrown a coal axe at him. He had struggled with her, and in a fall she had struck her head against an iron coal scuttle and died. The next day he had come to town, bought a knife and saw, and returned to the bungalow. The day after that—Good Friday—he had dismembered the body. Then he gave details of an attempt to destroy the remains by fire during the following day—an attempt which he had been forced to abandon. Finally he had packed parts of the body in the bag, and attempted to

dispose of them piecemeal by throwing them from railway-carriage windows during various journeys.

His story, which was punctuated by long silences, was not finished till half-past two in the morning. How much truth there was in it remained to be seen, but we determined that no time should be lost in testing it. I deputed a number of officers to accompany Savage down to Eastbourne, and by four in the morning they were on their way by car. They were met by officers of the East Sussex Constabulary, who had been warned that they were coming, and inspected the bungalow at Pevensey. There was ample evidence of the tragedy that had been enacted there. I shall not go into the details at length, save to say that the coal cauldron was so flimsy that a fall on it seemed unlikely to account for a serious injury.

Savage hurried back to town that Saturday evening. Meanwhile, in spite of cautions, Mahon had been talking somewhat freely to a young officer—Detective Sergeant Frew—who had been left in charge of him. This introduced several fresh points into the inquiry, and we knew that, at any rate, he was a man with a criminal record. To Savage, Mahon altered the dates of certain happenings—which were of significance—and on Monday morning he again asked to see Savage and volunteered a further detailed statement.

The only real question was now whether he was guilty of murder or whether Miss Kaye had been killed in circumstances that amounted to manslaughter. This was settled as our inquiries progressed. Before going to Pevensey Bay Miss Kaye had realized her securities and drawn £400 in four notes from the bank. Three of these were traced as having been cashed by Mahon in a false name. On the day that he had come to town after Miss Kaye's death he had wired to a girl, whom he had met casually in a Richmond street a little while before, to dine with him. On that occasion he had invited her to go down to

the bungalow on Good Friday to stay for a few days. She had gone down on that day and remained till the following Monday—and all the while the headless body of Miss Kaye was in a locked room which Mahon told her contained books. The man's account of this episode was that "he would have gone stark raving mad if he had not had her with him." But most damning of all was the discovery that Mahon had bought a knife and saw on April 12th—three days before he had gone into residence with Miss Kaye at the bungalow.

On Monday afternoon I accompanied Savage when he took the prisoner to Hailsham by car. There he was handed over to the local police and formally charged with murder. "It was not murder, as my statement clearly shows," he replied.

I think that this was one of those cases in which Scotland Yard justified its reputation for swift and effective action. Up to late on Friday evening we had not known that there was such a person as Miss Kaye. Although the crime had happened in a remote spot many miles' journey from London, by Monday afternoon the back of the investigation had been broken and we had gathered most of the true facts of the case.

My personal impression of this man was mixed. He was very well spoken, in some ways had an attractive manner, and was extremely plausible, but really, he was a moral degenerate, cunning and utterly without strength of character. Everything his wife could do she had done for him. He was the kind of man entirely incapable of resisting the temptation to self-indulgence in any direction, and when in a fix utterly unscrupulous of the means he would employ to get out of it.

He was convicted at Lewes Assizes in July, 1924, and very properly hanged.

The tendency to imitate in methods of murder was illustrated in a case that arose towards the end of the same

year. A young man named Norman Thorne, who ran a chicken farm at Crowborough, in Sussex, was engaged to a Miss Elsie Cameron, whose home was at Kensal Rise, and by whom he was visited from time to time.

On Friday, December 5th, the girl left home carrying a suitcase and telling no one of her destination, although it seemed to have been assumed that she was going to see Thorne. She did not return, and five days later her father wired to Thorne, who replied that he did not understand, that she was not with him, that he "feared the worst," and urging "no delay in making inquiries."

As time went on we were asked to send an officer from the Yard to coöperate with the East Sussex Constabulary in investigating the mystery. Obviously this request would not have been made unless they had felt that there was something much graver than the mere case of a missing person. So Chief Detective Inspector John Gillan, a strong and astute officer, was sent down.

One or two queer angles to the matter had become apparent. Thorne had fallen in love with another girl, and tried to break off his association with Miss Cameron some little while before her disappearance. She, however, was determined that he should marry her, and, on the ground that she was in a certain condition—which in fact she was not—had brought strong pressure to bear on him for an early wedding.

There were stories that Elsie Cameron had been seen at Crowborough on December 5th. Thorne declared that, although he had expected her on that day and had gone to the station to meet her, she had not turned up. To add colour to this was the fact that he had written letters to her during the week-end, expressing surprise at her non-arrival.

When Gillan took up the investigation the continued absence of the girl had excited much public attention. Thorne bore the publicity with composure and professed

much eagerness to help the police. He supplied them with a photograph, and was constantly making inquiries as to their progress. All this play-acting was exceptionally well done, but it did not impose on Gillan. There was only one person in the world who had an obvious reason for wishing Elsie Cameron out of the way. That was Thorne.

Gillan, with the local police, arranged that a close search of the farm should take place. Thorne expressed his willingness to give them every facility. It is recorded that on one occasion he was chatting cheerfully with officers who were digging, while he stood close to the spot where, a foot and a half below, Miss Cameron was buried. Moreover, he made a very frank statement to Gillan, going back to his schooldays, relating intimate details of his association with the girl and her resentment at his friendship with the other girl. Most of this was truthful—up to the point where he declared that he had not seen Miss Cameron since November 30th.

The day after this statement one of the constables who were digging on the farm came across the suitcase that had been carried by Elsie Cameron when she left home, still containing some articles of clothing that had belonged to her. On hearing of this, Gillan promptly put Thorne under detention, telling him that he would probably be charged with murder. All that day the search on the farm went on, without further result, and in the evening Thorne again asked to see Gillan and told a remarkable story. Elsie Cameron, he now admitted, had come to him on that Friday. She had told him, she said, that she meant to be married at once and intended to remain with him until the ceremony. There was an argument, and he left her, at about quarter to ten, to keep an appointment, previously made, to meet the other girl and her mother, who had been away, to assist them with their luggage at the railway station. When he returned home at half-past eleven Miss Cameron's body was hanging

from one of the beams of the hut. He cut her down. Terrified at his position he had, during the night, burned her clothes, cut up the body and buried it in a chicken run.

On the spot he indicated the body was found, and he was charged with the murder. The initial medical examination revealed no marks to confirm his story. On the contrary, there were a number of injuries to the head and body that suggested a struggle in which she had been hit by some blunt weapon—such as an Indian club that was found in Thorne's hut. It was a point of significance, too, although I do not think it was brought out at the trial, that among the things found in the hut were a number of newspaper cuttings on the Mahon case and several books on pathology.

Gillan and his assistant, Detective Sergeant (now Inspector) Askew, made an interesting if grim experiment at the hut. A close examination of the crossbeams showed no mark upon them. It was decided to make a test to see if they were strong enough to have withstood the weight of the dead girl. Two 56-lb. weights were placed on a chair and attached to a beam with some strong string that was found on the premises. Then the chair was slowly tilted so that they might slide gently off without any pronounced jerk. This it was found made an obvious mark on the beam. A second test was conducted with rope of the kind that Thorne said had been used by the dead girl. In this case weights were again placed on a chair, which was then kicked away as it might be by a person attempting suicide. This experiment showed that the rope left very distinct impressions on the soft wood.

The question at the trial resolved itself into a duel between the medical experts as to how Elsie Cameron had died. For the defense it was contended that she had attempted to hang herself but in reality had died from shock. The prosecution argued that death had been brought about from shock caused by a number of blows.

The jury accepted the latter theory, and Thorne was hanged for murder.

As I have already suggested, my own view is that this was a crime of imitation. Had Mahon never murdered Emily Kaye, Elsie Cameron might still be alive. Thorne, although, unlike Mahon, a man without criminal antecedents and whose life hitherto had been without reproach, was confronted with much the same problem—a woman who had become a nuisance to him. Mahon's methods suggested a way out to him, and he adopted them, avoiding, it should be said, many of the mistakes made by the other.

CHAPTER XXIX

What the Public Expects

AFTER more than forty years I still do not know what the public expects from a detective. I am pretty sure that the public itself does not know. If the business of the detective is to detect criminals, he must be allowed reasonable latitude in performing his duty, although I am far from advocating that he should be permitted to go outside the limits of law, fair play, or common sense. He should be allowed to feel that he will be supported and encouraged in his efforts to protect the community.

Consider, for a moment, the fact that a detective is dealing generally with folk whose reputation and liberty —perhaps even lives—are at stake. Is it to be wondered at that some of these people should, with or without the aid of clever lawyers, be utterly unscrupulous in the statements they make to discredit him and his methods? Most judges and others with practical experience know what value to put on these attacks. But there are always people who will believe them, and on occasion there arises an agitation carried to lengths that are hurtful to individuals, to the public service, and to justice.

The detective is one of the instruments of justice. Now, justice does not mean imprisonment; it does not mean improper conviction; it means that justice is done and nothing more. The erroneous idea that detectives exist to fill prisons and to manufacture crime will perhaps never be entirely killed. But it is a wrong trend of thought.

If there are dishonest and unscrupulous police officers

silly enough to trap suspects by unfair means and ready to stoop to perjury to bolster up a case, no laws or written regulations will ever deter them. The great safeguard of the public is in the character and quality of its police. If they are effectively to investigate crime they must be trusted; if they are not to be trusted, they ought to be abolished and others put in their place.

Constant pinpricks are liable to put the detective upon the defensive instead of letting him concentrate on the real object for which he exists—that of running criminals to earth. Once a man gets it impressed upon his mind that he must be very careful—that he is likely to retain his job much longer if he is careful than if he is resourceful and energetic—his usefulness is impaired, and he becomes a drone, ready to take the easiest way.

When a detective begins to investigate a crime he has several main things to consider. These may be set down thus:

The class of crime.
What persons were likely to commit that crime.
Whether any of these persons were in the vicinity when the crime was committed.
Who are the associates of these persons.

Details may be learned or inferred by observation, but there is always the necessity of asking questions. The single object must be to get at the truth. If a detective is able to appreciate the quality of truth—and this is a thing that cannot be taught—he will in this way sift his data and narrow down his inquiry till the evidence points to one or another person. Then it is his duty to act—to bring that person before the appropriate tribunal on whom alone rests the decision of guilt or innocence.

If, however, he hesitates—through timidity as to the lengths to which he is entitled to go—to carry his in-

quiries to a logical finish, the thing becomes a farce. He must go forward and let the legal conundrums crop up afterwards.

It is the truth that no police officer can compel anyone to answer his questions. That point has, I think, been injudiciously advertised. But to say that he shall *ask* no questions when suspicion concentrates on a particular individual is not only to violate common sense but would frequently result in great moral injustice to the person concerned. I have known it happen hundreds of times that the first study of a case would appear to implicate some man who, when seen and questioned, has been able to establish his innocence. It frequently occurs that, as an inquiry develops, three or four people are under suspicion in turn. They have to be questioned by someone—and it appears to me that it is in the interests of those innocently concerned that it should be done by a discreet police officer rather than with the formality and, maybe, with all the publicity of a court. The futility of this has been seen in some of those cases where coroners have subjected certain witnesses to severe examination on points that appeared suspicious. Really it is for the police to find the criminal.

It is a confusion of thought that regards any department of administration of the criminal law as engaged in a sort of game in which every guilty person shall be shielded in every possible way from betraying himself. The true principle is that no one shall be forced to incriminate himself—quite a different thing.

Another line of thought that, to me, seems muddled is in regard to methods of identification. I do not believe that anything can prevent an honestly mistaken identification. There are people who have unquestionably got doubles in appearance, action, and speech. They might be wrongly recognized in any circumstances, under any precautions.

In practical detective work what happens is this: A man who has been responsible for a crime has been seen by one or more people who say that they would know him again, and can give some sort of description. It is very difficult for the ordinary person to give a description of someone he may have only seen once, and one has to consider how far a particular witness has been likely to observe and remember and is capable of conveying an impression. Age, for instance, is very deceptive. Women are apt to be hazy about heights. Yet, after giving a totally misleading description, people may, and not infrequently do, recognize a suspect directly they are brought face to face.

Usually, however, there is some characteristic that has consciously or unconsciously impressed a witness. It may be that he stutters, has a scar, or a wooden leg, or is cross-eyed. It may be something trifling, such as the way in which he walks, a manner of holding the head or swinging the arms or even something that may be called atmosphere. Some wide general impression may be quite as effective in recalling a person as a detailed description. When I first heard a vague description of a man seen with Leon Beron on the night of his murder, I immediately recognized it as that of Stinie Morrison, although he had actually changed his appearance in certain details very much since I had originally known him as one of thousands of criminals with whom I had been brought into casual contact.

When an identification of a suspect is made, it is because he is different in some characteristic from other people. He is remembered, perhaps, because that characteristic is a striking one, and here is one of the points about identification parades that are frequently criticized by ill-informed people. Ten or a dozen people of apparently the same age, build and station in life, are invited to take part, and the suspect stands where he will

among them. It has been seriously argued that there should be a special resemblance in every detail among those with whom he stands. This would really make every attempt at identification a perfect farce. One very careful provincial officer who carried out an identification on these lines was ironically asked by Mr. Justice Swift whether the people concerned were allowed to wear false beards and to black their faces.

People who have some physical peculiarity that is noticeable are conscious of the fact, and will, if permitted, naturally attempt to hide it. In my old days in the East End we used to be much bothered with van thieves who would often succeed in stealing vans sometimes carrying loads worth £1,000 or so. One of the most notorious of these was a man called "Hoppy" Smith—this was not his real name—who had a pronounced limp, and was also noticeable by an abnormally large head, on which he always wore a hat with an exaggerated brim. When a man of this description was said to have helped in stealing a van I at once went out and found "Hoppy." To bring in for the identification parade a number of cripples lame in one leg was, of course, out of the question. "Hoppy" was equal to the occasion. He insisted that everyone should sit with rugs over their legs. I protested at this absurdity and the identification never took place. Fortunately, there was other evidence on which we were able to bring the crime home.

In another case—one of stabbing—it was said that the assailant had a pronounced black eye two or three days old. We knew and got hold of this man at once. His tale was that he saw what was done but had no part in it. Now, if this man was not to be identified by his black eye we should have had to get everyone to put a shade over that particular eye.

Another man, a forger, who was run down by John Ashley, my successor as chief constable of the C. I. D..

adopted a novel ruse to defeat attempts at identification. Descriptions always spoke of him as a thick-set, burly man. In fact, he was rather slim. When, however, he showed himself to lay down one of his forgeries, he invariably wore beneath his clothes a sort of rubber garment, which could be inflated to make him appear a man of great bulk. It could be deflated very quickly and so he would resume his normal appearance.

However anxious an officer may be that a suspect shall not appear conspicuous among those with whom he is put up for identification, it is not always possible to prevent it. During the war I had occasion to arrest a doctor who was six feet four inches or more in height. Where could a dozen men of that stature have been found out of uniform at that time? I put the point to my prisoner who appreciated the position and frankly admitted his identity, although he denied the crime with which he was charged.

The fact is that in London all identification parades are conducted with extreme fairness—and usually the person who least of all wants a man wrongly identified is the person in charge of the case, to whom a mistake may mean endless work and trouble. It should also be remembered that in every case at least ten members of the public, gathered usually from passers-by in the street, take part, and thus it will be seen how unlikely it is that any deliberate unfairness would escape notice. Circumstances may arise under any system of safeguards in which a doubt is possible. The only way to meet these is to give at the trial a truthful and impartial account of the way in which the identification took place and let the Court judge of the reliability and value of the evidence.

When a detective undertakes an investigation it is his business to ascertain the available evidence by all legitimate and common-sense means. There are many things he sees and hears which are not immediately relevant evi-

dence, for a great part must necessarily be hearsay and inference. As far as possible he has to find witnesses who can give direct evidence on essential points. Hence the reason for such things as statements and identification parades. In the end, every bit of evidence has to be proved by the spoken word of some witness—even a document or a bloodstain has to be sworn to. Human nature being what it is, witnesses will sometimes make mistakes, or consciously or unconsciously distort the truth. No witness is infallible, although there is a tendency among some people to think that a certain type of scientific evidence cannot be doubted. In fact, experts are no more immune from mistakes than other folk. I would much sooner accept the word of an intelligent and disinterested man in the street when he says that at a particular time and place a definite event occurred than that of a gentleman who asserts opinions and theories as if they were unchallengeable facts.

CHAPTER XXX

The Last Chapter

On July 31, 1929, I bade farewell to Scotland Yard. For close on forty-two years I had been an officer of police, and was then the "father" of the Metropolitan Police Force. In the early days of my service I had been laid up with a cold for four days, and for ninety-four days I was incapacitated by injuries received on duty. Apart from these trifling intervals, practically the whole of my manhood life had been spent in the effort to repress and detect crime. I do not regret one single day, and, could my life be lived over again, I would ask nothing better than to spend it in the same way.

The wrench was severe, but it was at least mitigated by the expressions of good-will from my colleagues of all ranks in the service, and from many eminent men and great public servants with whom it has been my good fortune to be brought into contact. Not least of these was a note from a gentleman whose career I had more than once caused to be interrupted:

> Dear Mr. Wensley:
>
> I feel I must join with all other criminals and old lags in sincerely wishing you years of happiness and a complete rest.

He signed his name, and notwithstanding the little ambiguity in the phrase "a complete rest," I flatter myself that his sentiments were genuine.

Those forty-two years in the thick of the fight against

crime have, I think, at least taught me to keep a balanced perspective. I have learned that the world is not so bad after all, and that even criminals have their good and bad points, very much like other people. It is not always their fault that conditions have moulded them wrongly. With very few exceptions criminals are made by environment and circumstances. There are incorrigible criminals, but there are no *born* criminals, apart from those who are mentally defective. I have had to deal with many men who in other circumstances would have been fine and valuable citizens—men with great physical and mental qualities. They have, in some cases, been taught since childhood to regard robbery in one form or another as a natural thing; or their first plunge may have been taken through desperation, or through a boyish dislike of monotonous work and a wish to take a short cut to what they regard as the good things of this life. In time they become disillusioned, for sooner or later they pay a heavy price—but it is almost always too late. They have formed habits of living, habits of thought, that they cannot break. They become reckless, cynical, lead wretched lives, and for the most part die wretched deaths. Yet, paradoxical as it may sound, there is frequently fine material among them. All criminals are not heartless ruffians.

I have seen enormous changes since I became a police officer. The old-time, ignorant brutal criminal has practically ceased to exist. He was the product of a rougher and sterner age—an age when no police officer, in or out of uniform, was certain that a day would pass without his being violently attacked. Looking up an old report I find that in the year I joined the service there were more than two thousand assaults on the Metropolitan Police. These, of course, were not all by criminals, and I mention the fact as showing an attitude by the rougher classes. When I first went to Whitechapel there were men who made a

practice of feigning to be in a drunken sleep on some doorstep. The moment a constable bent over to rouse them they would be at his throat. The police were regarded by certain types as the common enemy. It was the exception rather than the rule for any person to submit to arrest without putting up some sort of a fight.

A housebreaker, nowadays, will scarcely ever enter a place that he knows to be occupied. In those days he cared little. If he was interrupted while ransacking the house, so much the worse for the interrupter, who was lucky if he was not knocked out and injured by a jemmy or some other weapon. The modern housebreaker would have more sense. He would reflect that the risk was greater than the possible profit and pass on elsewhere.

Indiscriminate violence has, in fact, gone out of fashion with professional criminals, although here and there a few isolated cases may occur. The average criminal of to-day thinks more than his prototype. There is seldom anything to be gained by violence, and it is pretty certain to lead to a much heavier sentence. True, there are times when a crime may by its nature involve a deliberate resort to violence, but these are comparatively rare.

The increase in criminal intelligence is also to be noted in the fact that fewer criminals now carry burglarious tools. Thus to a large extent they avoid the possibility of unpleasant consequences should they be stopped while on the way to the scene of their operations. They rely on what they may find on the spot—perhaps in an outhouse where tools are kept and where they may find a chisel or a hammer or other implements. The hint may be of service to some householders.

One direction in which detective work has been affected is due to physical reasons—the growth of London and the increase of transport facilities. Criminals are not now concentrated so much in one area as they used to be. When I went to Whitechapel it was full of the criminal

classes. They lived there and largely worked there. The common lodging houses were full of ne'er-do-wells, and the slum areas were nests of crime. The streets were infested by infamous women. From the City boundaries to the Docks there were great warehouses packed with goods that represented perhaps greater wealth than could be found in any area of similar size in the world. Practically all sailors reaching the port of London were paid off in the neighbourhood after long sailing-ship voyages and were obvious prey for crimps and other parasites. By comparison, Whitechapel to-day is a quiet and harmless district.

I would not have it supposed that the East End, either then or now, was nothing but an unrelieved haunt of vice and crime. I should be ungrateful were I to convey that impression, for there I made some of the most valued friendships of my life. Both among the poor and the well-to-do, among Jews and Gentiles, I met people of the finest character I have ever known, who would not have stooped to a mean or dishonest act to save their lives. There may have been rough diamonds, but there were diamonds none the less. High ideals and generous acts could be found among that squalor. Life was less artificial than in some other quarters of London, and there was, at any rate, no make-believe.

If the criminals of the old days were ignorant and brutal, it should also be said that the criminal law was carried out with a severity that would not now be tolerated for a moment. Long sentences of penal servitude for comparatively minor offenses were the rule rather than the exception. There was little attempt at anything in the nature of standardized punishment.

All this I have seen gradually change to a better order of things. Criminals and suspected criminals are now dealt with in a much more humane and common-sense

fashion. Except in serious cases, most people awaiting trial are now allowed bail—in my early days, guilty or innocent, and even for comparatively trivial offenses, they were almost always held in jail. Save those exceptional cases where stolen goods might be got rid of, or evidence tampered with, this is seldom done now. First offenders are now usually put on probation, and even for old hands sentences have become much milder and bear some logical relation to each other.

For some reason which I have not troubled to analyze the theory on which the old system of long sentences would be sometimes defended failed to work out—that the longer a professional criminal was kept in prison the less crime there would be. Batches of men would be sent away for five, seven, ten, or more years, but the work in my old district never seemed to lessen on that account. The criminal was always with us. We would have as many as forty or fifty convicts on license reporting every month. Now I should doubt if there are more than two or three.

The truth is, it has been realized that vindictive punishments are not, as a rule, effective deterrents. Not quite so well appreciated is the fact that the only way to stamp out crime is to impress the criminal with the certainty that he will be caught and punished—within limits the amount of punishment does not matter. The only way to that end is by the use of an adequate number of efficient detectives, efficiently organized and adequately equipped.

THE END

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